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WHY LABOR LOVES DEAN
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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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BAD PRESS

What the Media Can Learn
from Stephen Glass.



And What It Can't.
JONATHAN CHAIT

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A JOURNAL OF POLITICS AND THE ARTS

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CORRESPONDENCE

ROYAL TRIUMVIRATE

I HAVE BEEN HONORED WITH A RARE trifecta—three attacks on me in a single issue:

1. Bob Drogin takes me to task for doubting that Saddam Hussein's secret research on Congo Crimean Hemorrhagic Fever (CHF) was for anything other than a search for a cure ("Friendly Fire," October 27). Drogin's faith in Saddam's concern for public health is touching, but he does not know a thing about medicine. He ridicules my claim that CHF is "rare," saying, "It's true that the CHF virus is rare inside the Beltway. But the disease is common in ... Iraq."

Common? The Centers for Disease Control's top expert in the field estimates that the number of annual cases in Iraq "can be counted on the fingers of one hand"—in a population of 25 million. An Iraqi's chance of getting CHF is five million to one. Drogin is about seven times more likely to get hit by lightning.

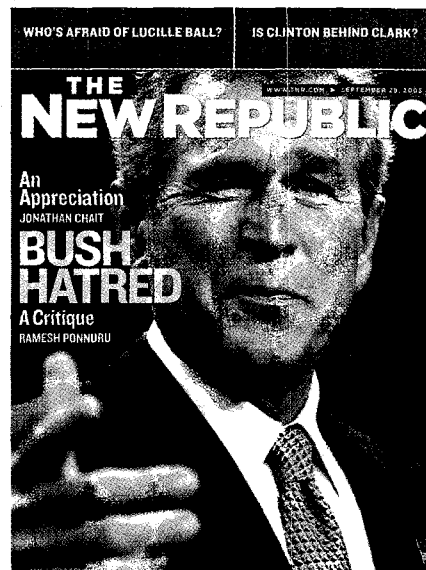
Drogin's ignorance is based on the fact that he thinks that "endemic" is a synonym for "common." St. Louis encephalitis is endemic to the United States, yet we average 128 cases per year.

2. Your online edition honors my theory about Saddam's weapons with the ultimate TNR adjective: "clever" ("Not Quite in Time," posted October 10). I speculated that Saddam switched from building up huge stocks of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) to maintaining the capacity for just-in-time production.

The TNR online blog, &c., seems to think, however, that this theory is contradicted by the fact that Saddam did not therefore "just-in-time" produce WMD for use in the Iraq war.

But we know from the Gulf war that, while Saddam has many uses for WMD, overt wartime first-use against a nuclear superpower is simply not one of them. The reason is obvious. As James Baker warned Saddam in 1991, doing so would mean instant annihilation.

Saddam uses WMD for internal sup-



pression (the Kurds) or as a weapon of war against near-equals (the Iran-Iraq war). He is not stupid enough to use them in open warfare against the United States.

3. Your "Notebook" compiler seems to think that I have contradicted my claim of five months ago that, if we had not found WMD within five months, we would have a credibility problem ("The Trouble With Deadlines," October 27). Of course we have a credibility problem. That is why I wrote my column!

My column makes two points, neither of which is reflected in the quotation TNR selected: (a) We cannot yet know whether WMD stocks did or do exist because Saddam hid them among his conventional weapons, and it turns out that he had an unimaginably large stock of conventional weapons—a *million* tons spread over 130 depots, many of which are twice the size of Manhattan. David Kay's team has as yet searched less than 10 percent of these depots. Until the rest are searched, the question of whether Saddam had WMD stocks cannot *in principle* be answered. (b) We do know that Kay found "dozens

THE NEW REPUBLIC (ISSN 0028-6583), Vol. 229, Number 19, Issue 4, 634, November 10, 2003. (Printed in the United States on October 30, 2003.) Published weekly, except for combined issues dated April 21 & 28, July 7 & 14, July 28 & August 4, August 18 & 25, September 8 & 15, October 13 & 20, December 1 & 8, and December 29, 2003 through January 12, 2004) at 1331 H Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20005. Telephone: (202) 508-4444. For advertising inquiries, please contact Mandy Hansen at (202) 508-4444 or our NY sales office at (212) 465-9447. Yearly subscriptions: \$79.97; foreign, \$119.97 (U.S. funds). Canada, \$99.97 (U.S. funds). Back issues, \$9.00 domestic and \$10.00 foreign/Canada (includes postage & handling). © 2003 by The New Republic, LLC. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Rights and permissions: (202) 628-9383. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. For hard copy reprints, call (202) 508-4444. Microform, Canadian Periodical Index, and CD-ROM are available through ProQuest, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone: (800) 521-0600. Postmaster: Send changes of address to The New Republic, P.O. Box 37298, Boone, IA 50037-0298. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope (e-mail address: letters@tnr.com). For subscription inquiries or problems call (800) 827-1289 or visit our website at www.thenewrepublic.com.

of WMD-related program activities," including research on the exceedingly rare CCHF virus, all of which (i) eluded the Blix U.N. inspection team, (ii) constituted an open-and-shut violation of U.N. Resolution 1441, (iii) posed an ongoing threat to Iraq's people, neighbors, and the United States.

TNR's fourth mention of me in that issue is correct. My name is spelled correctly on the masthead, although TNR has given entirely new meaning to the phrase "contributing editor."

CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER
Washington, D.C.

INTEMPERATE

RAMESH PONNURU'S DEFENSE OF President Bush's moderation rings quite hollow ("Hate Crimes," September 29). Ponnuru asserts that Bush has pursued moderate policies on issues like education, health care, and the environment, while neglecting to address Bush's fiscal policies and foreign policies, which are patently the more extreme—and significant—set of policies since September 11, 2001. Even if one grants Ponnuru's argument that evidence of Bush's moderation can be seen in his education policy or the expansion of Medicare, any astute observer of present political realities knows that these reforms are destined to become unfunded mandates in the face of rapidly burgeoning deficits and the skyrocketing costs of rebuilding Iraq. It is my strong suspicion that, as the costs of his presidency are tallied in the years to come, Bush will sadly prove to have been neither a moderate nor an effective leader.

JOHN JUECH
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

LEGAL EAGLES

JEFFREY ROSEN MAKES A FUNDAMENTAL error when he warns that groups like George Soros's Open Society Institute (OSI) could undermine campaign finance reform and McCain-Feingold's attempts to regulate soft money by making so-called "independent expenditures" on behalf of political candidates ("Magic Words," September 29). As a tax-exempt private foundation, OSI is prohibited under wholly separate federal tax laws from engaging in any electoral activity and from making any partisan political expenditures, "independent" or otherwise. As a matter of law, Rosen should realize that under no circumstances could OSI make expendi-

tures supporting or opposing political candidates.

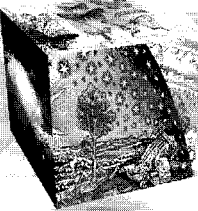
EILEEN B. HERSHENOV
General Counsel
Open Society Institute
New York, New York

ROSEN'S ARTICLE CONCLUDES, "If there's a clearer definition of judicial activism than an opinion that refuses to defer to Congress, the executive, and 30 years of Supreme Court precedents, I can't think of it." That may be a clear definition, but it's not the right one. "Judicial activism" is not about deference to any of the three branches of government; it is about deference to legal texts. If a judge puts something into the Constitution or into a statute that isn't there, or takes something out that is there, then he or she is being an activist. Conversely, it is not judicial restraint for a court to defer to its own activist precedents or to the political branches when they violate the Constitution.

ROGER CLEGG
General Counsel
Center for Equal Opportunity
Sterling, Virginia

JEFFREY ROSEN REPLIES:

I didn't suggest that advocacy groups like OSI, which accepts no corporate donations, could openly support or oppose candidates; only that, if McCain-Feingold is upheld, groups like OSI might feel pressure to reinvent themselves as "shadow alternatives to the political parties" by funding nominally independent issue ads that have the effect of benefiting particular campaigns. As for judicial activism, I agree with Cass R. Sunstein that the only neutral definition is purely descriptive: Judges are activist when they strike down laws. Any other definition—such as Roger Clegg's suggestion that a judge is an activist if he "puts something into the Constitution ... that isn't there"—isn't neutral because it relies on highly contested judgments about what is (or isn't) in the Constitution to begin with. By abandoning a neutral and descriptive definition of activism for an easily manipulated normative one, Clegg can call decisions restrained when he agrees with them and activist when he doesn't. ■



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Old Allies

IT WAS GEORGE W. BUSH'S FINEST moment. Only a few days after September 11, the president stood amid the smoldering ruins of the World Trade Center, surrounded by hundreds of firefighters and policemen chanting "USA! USA!" The moment recalled an event that took place in the same spot three decades earlier. For two weeks in May 1970, lower Manhattan was convulsed by what *The New York Times* described as an eruption of "jingoistic joy." In a show of support for the war in Vietnam, which quickly became a show of contempt for nearby antiwar demonstrators, thousands of construction workers took to the streets, waving U.S. flags and banners that read WE SUPPORT NIXON AND AGNEW.

This was the moment Richard Nixon's "silent majority" finally spoke up. It was a harbinger of the 1972 election, in which Nixon successfully portrayed antiwar candidate George McGovern as "Mr. Radical Chic." More importantly, it offered a preview of the next two decades of U.S. political history, in which the GOP convinced traditionally Democratic voters that their security could not be entrusted to the likes of Walter Mondale and Michael Dukakis. Along with crime, drugs, and affirmative action, foreign policy became a cultural issue, one that would cost Democrats five of six presidential elections between 1968 and 1988. Next year, it may well cost them another.

Needless to say, not everyone agrees with this assessment. In a spring 2003 essay, Phillip Gordon and Michael O'Hanlon of the Brookings Institution argued that the party should be able to rally "widespread support" for its foreign policies so long as it "can overcome an undeserved reputation for weakness that, in reality, is based on only a few years of post-Vietnam confusion."

Confusion is one way of putting it. From McGovern's admonition that the United States must "come home" to a majority of congressional Democrats' opposition to the first Gulf war, a suspicion of U.S. power lingered for a generation in Democratic foreign policy salons. As a result, the public consistently identified the GOP—by ratios of three to one in the 1984 and 1988 elections—as the party better able to contend with



America's foes abroad. If it was true, as Richard Scammon and Ben Wattenberg argued in their 1970 book, *The Real Majority*, that the Democratic advantage on economic issues and the Republican advantage on social issues created an even playing field, then national security repeatedly put the Republicans over the top.

That advantage disappeared with Bill Clinton, who drained foreign policy debates of their ideological substance and benefited mightily from the end of the cold war: By 1999, only 2 to 3 percent of Americans identified defense and foreign policy as the most pressing issues of the day. As a result, a pillar of the Republican Party's electoral strategy disintegrated overnight. Lately, however, voters and politicians seem to have reverted to their cold war habits. Karl Rove was pilloried last year for boasting that Americans "trust the Republican Party to do a better job of... protecting America." But he was right. During the 2002 elections, CBS and Gallup polls found that voters identified national security as the most important issue of the day and, by cold war margins, believed the GOP could do a better job of safeguarding it. True, the faltering war effort in Iraq has somewhat eroded those numbers. But, in a CNN/Gallup/*USA Today* poll taken last month, Republicans still enjoyed a 15-point advantage on national security, while a Pew Research Center survey in September found that 64 percent of respondents still approve of Bush's handling of the war on terrorism.

As to why this should be so, presidential candidate Wesley Clark laments in his new book, *Winning Modern Wars*, that Bush has reignited the "culture war" over foreign policy that began in 1968. Indeed, polls show that the culture gap on national security and defense, which narrowed significantly during the

'90s, has reopened. The familiar demographic subgroups from the cold war—white men, Southerners, religious Christians—tend to be the most hawkish. African Americans, residents of the Northeast, and people with advanced degrees tend to be the least. The divide, in other words, tracks the other fissures that separate red and blue America, except that when it comes to national security, the GOP draws support in both Americas.

Credit for this hardly rests with Bush alone. Descriptions of America like "empire" and "bully"—banished from our political lexicon after Vietnam—have returned to favor among the 2004 Democratic candidates. Indeed, far from being a contest between "Bush-lites," the race for the Democratic presidential nomination has centered on opposition to Iraq policy. Senators John Edwards and John Kerry voted against funding the ongoing operation there. For the first time in three decades, we even have "peace" candidates.

More important, at least as far as cultural cues go, the brand of isolationism that the likes of Howard Dean peddle isn't the blue-collar, America-first isolationism of, say, Pat Buchanan. It is the dovish worldview of what *Los Angeles Times* reporter Ronald Brownstein has called Dean's "Starbucks ghetto"—the highly educated, socially conscious voters who once turned out in droves for McGovern. (Among Democrats without a college degree, according to the latest Democracy Corps poll, Dean trails badly in both Iowa and New Hampshire.) Unlike the Buchanans, Dean's antiwar constituents view U.S. power as tainted, marred by its involvement in too many unsavory conflicts; along with Dean's support for gay marriage and other signature positions of elite liberalism, the GOP will have a field day with this. Dean feeds off of the resuscitated antiwar movement, whose original incarnation, as Adam Garfinkle documents in his book, *Telltale Hearts: The Origins and Impact of the Vietnam Antiwar Movement*, "deterred more Americans from opposing [Vietnam] sooner because they were afraid of the company they would have to keep." In their race to see who can denounce U.S. policy in Iraq most fiercely, the leading Democratic presidential candidates may be kindling that fear once more. **LAWRENCE F. KAPLAN**

Peter Beinart will return next week.

Sounds of Silence

LAST DECEMBER, WHEN President Bush named Tom Kean, the mild-mannered Republican former governor of New Jersey, to lead the commission investigating the September 11 attacks, critics scoffed that Kean would be an administration patsy. But the White House's resistance to releasing crucial information about the attacks has stirred him to anger. "I will not stand for it," Kean fumed last week. "Anything that has to do with nine-eleven, we have to see it—anything." Kean has complained for several weeks about executive branch foot-dragging and has suggested the

administration may be trying to run out the clock on the committee's mandate, which expires in May.

Kean's not the only one who's upset. Other Republican members of the committee, including former Senator Slade Gorton, a stalwart conservative, have echoed his complaints. And, given that the commission's mandate is to determine how the attacks happened and to make recommendations about stopping another one, these complaints are serious business.

Any lack of cooperation from the White House is troubling, but one key point of contention is especially disturbing: whether the commission will have access to daily intelligence briefings given to the president in the weeks before September 11, 2001. Particularly in light of revelations that at least one of these reports indicated that Al Qaeda was planning to hijack U.S. airliners, these briefings are clearly relevant. Studying them might help the commission recommend ways of prioritizing future briefings more effectively.

But the White House is blocking the commission from seeing the briefings. The administration claims they contain sensitive information that, if made public, could compromise national security. But so does limiting

our understanding of the terrorist attacks. And there's little reason to think that a panel of seasoned statesmen like former Indiana Representative Lee Hamilton, the commission's co-chair, would expose classified intelligence. The same goes for their professional staff, overseen by Phillip Zelikow, a professor at the University of Virginia, who is chummy with the GOP national security establishment and who co-authored a book with national security adviser Condoleezza Rice. In fact, the 9/11 commission has vowed to take utmost care to protect the intelligence it receives.

The other key White House argument is that the release of past daily intelligence briefings will distort future ones. The White House argues that government officials might shape their advisories differently—cover their asses, to put it bluntly—if they have reason to think the briefings could become public someday. The Bush administration has repeatedly invoked this reasoning to defend "deliberative" internal documents on subjects as varied as Justice Department investigations, inter-

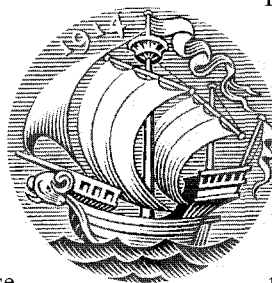
nal memos written by stymied judicial nominee Miguel Estrada, and Dick Cheney's secret energy policy sessions. While there may be theoretical merit to this argument, it is certainly less compelling than the need to fully account for a terrorist catastrophe and prevent another one. And it is badly undermined by the White House's tendency to invoke it only in cases when the administration may have something to hide. Consider, by contrast, the fact that Bob Woodward was readily shown hundreds of secret National Security Council documents revealing vast amounts of deliberative information for his hagiographic book, *Bush at War*.

Another reason to distrust the White House's motives is its obvious, and loathsome, hostility to the commission itself. For months after September 11, the White House and its congressional allies blocked the creation of an independent panel. Last October, in fact, John McCain and Joe Lieberman complained to *The New York Times* that the Bush administration was "deliberately sabotaging their efforts to create an independent investigation of the Sept. 11 attacks."

Even after Bush yielded to pressure from 9/11 survivors and allowed a commission, he failed to fund it in his budget request this year, forcing Congress to come to its rescue again.

These crude White House tactics seem more than a little self-defeating.

Because Congress can extend the commission's life, delays will only push any possibly embarrassing revelations closer to the 2004 election. Surely the White House realizes that the perception of a cover-up is more politically damaging than turning over a few intelligence reports. Unless, of course, it really does have something scandalous to hide. ■



NOTEBOOK

ED GILLESPIE CRIES BIGOTRY... KOFI ANNAN SHIRKS RESPONSIBILITY

IDENTITY CARD

LAST WEEK *THE WASHINGTON POST* ran an article on the growing belief among conservatives that gay marriage will be a crucial issue in the 2004 elections. Nothing too surprising about that. But one thing about the article caught our eye. The *Post* quoted a novel argument made by Republican National Committee Chairman Ed Gillespie against gay marriage proponents. "[T]hose in favor of gay marriage seem to indicate that tolerance is no longer defined by my accepting people for who they are," Gillespie explained in remarks originally published last month by *The Christian Science Monitor*. "I accept people for who they are and love them. That doesn't mean I have to agree or that I have to turn my back on the tenets of my faith and reject the tenets of my faith when it comes to homosexuality. I think when people say, well, no, that is not enough, it is not enough that you accept me for who I am, you have to agree with and condone my choice. That to me is religious bigotry and I believe that is intolerance and I think they are the ones who are crossing a line here."

Never mind the logical idiocy of Gillespie's remark, which implies that any law contravening his view of church doctrine—civil divorce, for instance—is a form of religious persecution. More interesting is the new rhetorical weapon the Republican Party seems to be wielding with growing frequency. Call it the bigotry card. Gillespie's critique of the gay marriage movement is the latest in a series of conservative efforts to accuse Democrats of cultural and racial prejudice. Most notably, Republicans have recently tried to smear Senate Democrats as anti-Catholic for blocking President Bush's conservative judicial nominees—on the grounds that these judges are being punished for views dictated by their religion. (See "What



Ed Gillespie

It Takes," by Franklin Foer, October 13 & 20.) Indeed, such attacks have become particularly common in judicial nomination battles. Texas GOP Senator John Cornyn recently suggested that Democratic opposition to appeals court nominee Charles Pickering, who once made an extraordinary intervention on behalf of a cross-burning defendant, was motivated by anti-Southern bias. Earlier this year, conservatives wailed that Democratic opposition to another appeals court nominee, Miguel Estrada, was anti-Hispanic. And, last month, a commentator for the conservative *National Review Online* wrote that African American appeals court nominee Janice Rogers Brown, whom Democrats are preparing to block, "will be the next victim of the Democrats' racism." Conservatives have long howled over liberals' exploitation of identity politics. Their new strategy seems to be, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em.

DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

READERS OF *THE NEW YORK TIMES* awoke last week to a rare hopeful piece about the future of the Middle East. As London bureau chief Warren Hoge reported, Saudi Arabia, one of the most loathsome regimes in the region, is finally facing a robust challenge. The movement, according to the piece, emanates from a small house in North London. It is run by an exiled surgeon-cum-activist named Saad Al-Fagih. Hoge depicts Al-Fagih as a Tom Paine-style anti-monarchist, "a democracy advocate." He describes how Al-Fagih's websites "offer up evidence of... government abuse, corruption and nepotism." But Hoge's portrait can only be so admiring, because it omits certain critical details—such as the small matter of Al-Fagih's links to terrorism. According to *Newsweek's* veteran Middle East correspondent Christopher Dickey, who has waded through Al-Fagih's online chat sessions, "You'd think you were attending a virtual Qaeda convention." And that's not inconsistent with Al-Fagih's own record. Last year, British papers reported that Al-Fagih bought a satellite phone that ended up in the hands of Osama bin Laden and was used to plan the 1998 African embassy bombings. This might be a coincidence if it were Al-Fagih's only terrorist tie. But it isn't. His associate Mohammed Al-Masari acknowledges having collaborated with Osama bin Laden. When the British government tried to deport Al-Masari, Al-Fagih campaigned hard against it. With democracy activists like these, who needs theocrats?

FATAL DISTRACTION

FOR MONTHS NOW, CRITICS OF THE U.S.-U.K. administration of Iraq have been asserting that the project would be done better if only the United Nations were in charge. Paradoxically, this chorus reached a crescendo

after the August 19 terrorist bombing of U.N. headquarters that took the lives of 22 people, including the head of mission, and wounded and maimed 150 more. At that point, the recriminations were directed against American officials who, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan hinted, had abdicated their "responsibility for law and order." But, this week, an independent committee named by none other than Annan himself found that "[t]he U.N. security management system failed in its mission to provide adequate security to U.N. staff in Iraq." In fact, the Americans responsible for security in Baghdad had offered the United Nations

protection and were refused. And, when American troops erected a five-ton barrier across the service road adjoining U.N. headquarters and installed concertina wire designed to block access to the compound, U.N. officials peremptorily ordered them to remove the barricades. Such hubris appears to have gotten people killed in Baghdad—and it could get them killed at other U.N. sites as well. The report charges that security throughout the U.N. network of missions is "dysfunctional" and "provides little guarantee of security ... in Iraq or other high-risk environments." As the U.N. communications director in Iraq observed, the

decisions in Baghdad "clearly went well beyond gross negligence." Perhaps Annan ought to look in the mirror before blaming Americans for failing to protect his staff.

TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES

BUSH TOLD HIS SENIOR AIDES Tuesday that he "didn't want to see any stories" quoting unnamed administration officials in the media anymore, and, if he did, there would be consequences, said a senior administration official who asked that his name not be used."—From *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 16 (thanks to Alan Greenblatt) ■

HONESTY CHECK

Candidate: Wesley Clark

Category: Intellectual Honesty

Grade: D



At last Sunday's debate, Wesley Clark explained why he would have voted against the

White House's \$87 billion Iraq budget request. The spending bill, Clark explained, was nothing more than another "blank check" for the president, just like the war resolution that got the United States enmeshed in Iraq. "Now we're trying to give him another blank check. There's no telling what's going to happen," Clark explained.

Talk about a catch-22. On the one hand, Bush's budget request has been slammed for its specificity. Democrats don't like its painfully honest price tag—they constantly invoke the exact dollar figures that would go to electricity or water or health care in Iraq and compare them with spending levels in the United States. At the same time, the request gets labeled an irresponsible "blank check" that lets the president do whatever he wants without having a "plan." But those two arguments cannot co-exist. And it seems pretty clear that, whatever you may think of it, Bush's bill is not a blank check. It is a very specific \$87 billion check. You'd hope a general wouldn't resort to some hollow sound bite



that sounds cooked up by party pollsters. —Michael Crowley

COMPROMISING POSITION

Candidate: John Kerry

Category: Intellectual Honesty

Grade: D



John Kerry is being too coy for his own good. The Massachusetts senator says that he has it "on the highest authority" that the French and Russians were prepared to reach a compromise with the U.S. at the U.N. on the eve of the Iraq war.

Pressed for details, Kerry refused to divulge his source and would not elaborate on the shape of the supposed compromise. "I'm going to talk about it more publicly at a later time," he demurred.

Why a later time? Maybe because, according to just about every known account, there never was a compromise in the works. Recall that French President Jacques Chirac vowed to veto any new U.N. resolution on Iraq "whatever the circumstances." Recall,

too, that Russian diplomats said they would "never support" a resolution authorizing war and that the Germans took exactly the same position. Or, as France's ambassador to Great Britain, Gerard Errera, put it soon after the war commenced, a draft compromise resolution "never had a chance to get a majority of the Security Council with or without the negative vote of France."

Since Kerry's new information will come as news even to the French, he has a special obligation to clarify exactly how he came across it. —Lawrence F. Kaplan

STUMP HUGGER

Candidate: Joe Lieberman

Category: Domestic Policy

Grade: D



Joe Lieberman has long prided himself on his environmental record. And, until recently, he had the

right to, having helped make Connecticut one of the most environmentally friendly states in the country. But, in recent months, Lieberman's record has tilted decidedly toward grandstanding and rhetoric at the expense of action. When Bush named Utah Governor Mike Leavitt to run the EPA, Lieberman joined Hillary Clinton in placing a block on the nomination until the administration explained the failure to investigate air contamination at Ground Zero. It was a high-

profile, even admirable, move, showing that Lieberman was willing to go to the mat on issues that supposedly matter to him.

Supposedly, that is, because since placing the block, Lieberman has been largely AWOL from Environment and Public Works Committee hearings, an embarrassing record outlined in October 22's *The Hill*, which said Lieberman has attended only two of the last 27 committee and subcommittee meetings, including seven markups. And, while he submitted questions for the nominee, Lieberman skipped both Leavitt's hearing and the vote on his nomination. It wasn't pressing senatorial business that kept him away but campaign appointments—a fund-raiser with Gray Davis and a dessert klatch in Boca Raton, respectively.

Worst of all, though, Lieberman never deigned to meet with Leavitt in person, even though the nominee met with six of the eight other Democratic candidates. Lieberman, to be sure, is a busy man, but Leavitt is on track to oversee an agency that the senator claims is near and dear to his heart. Unfortunately, when it comes to choosing between campaigning and governing, Lieberman's preference is clear.

—Clay Risen

For primary items updated daily and complete candidate rankings, visit www.tnr.com/primary.

Campaign Journal At His Service

BY RYAN LIZZA

HOWARD DEAN IS about to take another huge step toward winning the Democratic nomination. According to union officials and aides to several campaigns, it is nearly certain that the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) will endorse Dean next week. This may sound like just another obscure piece of campaign inside baseball, but the endorsement could transform the race.

With 1.6 million members, SEIU is the biggest and fastest-growing union in the AFL-CIO. Its 63-member executive board will meet in Washington on November 6 to make its decision, and no other candidates are being considered for the endorsement. "It's come down to the one candidate who has demonstrated enough support among our members," says Andy Stern, SEIU's president, "which is Howard Dean. And anything else we did would really not be true to what we said, which is that members are the soul of this union. There is only one candidate who you could honestly say has enough support to merit an endorsement. With the AFL, it was [Dick] Gephardt or no endorsement. With SEIU, it's Dean or no endorsement, and no endorsement could win. . . . Some people like Dean, but they don't think the union should endorse."

If the national SEIU decides not to formally endorse, the many local branches that are pro-Dean would still probably be free to back him. "There is a very rational argument to let those locals go on their own and let everyone else continue on with their business," says Stern. "It's the coalition of the willing as opposed to dragging the agnostics." But others insist a national endorsement is a fait accompli. Says an aide to a rival candidate who fought fiercely for SEIU's imprimatur, "It's done. It's Dean."

ORGANIZATIONALLY AND IDEOLOGICALLY, Stern's SEIU and the Dean campaign are a natural fit. Under Stern's leadership, SEIU has grown by some 735,000 members. "They've done it by building this army of organizers," says a Dean adviser. "People that approach things with the same zeal as you find in the Dean campaign. These are folks on a mission." And, just as Dean has criticized Washington Democrats, Stern has been an irritant to the old-guard labor leaders. Earlier this year, after AFL-CIO chief John Sweeney ignored a sweeping proposal on how to increase labor's ranks, Stern and four other union presidents set up their own organization to work on recruitment outside the sclerotic bureaucracy of the AFL.

"The Dean campaign bears a lot of characteristics of a successful SEIU organizing drive," says a Democratic labor consultant. "The depth of commitment, the sense that it's not just about winning a contract but building a movement. And it's something none of the other candidates are doing." The Dean campaign has convinced SEIU members and leaders that it shares the same approach to organizing. The master plan of Dean campaign manager Joe Trippi is to build an organization of two million supporters who can each contribute \$200. That's exactly how SEIU approaches its work. The union has a plan to raise \$20 million next year from 500,000 members. Like the Dean campaign, SEIU also recruits young, idealistic activists. If your college-age daughter at Berkeley or Oberlin didn't work on the Dean campaign last summer, she probably organized for SEIU. And the key to both organizations' message is empowerment. When Dean spoke before SEIU's 1,500 top activists recently, he spent some time talking about issues, but his real pitch was a fiery appeal for them to join his movement. "His message of 'you have the power' is very similar to what we say every day to nonunion workers," says Stern.

Not that issues didn't matter. Because many of its members are employed in low-wage jobs without health benefits, SEIU made it clear to every candidate seeking its endorsement that he or she had to have a comprehensive, written health care plan. An SEIU advertisement at the airport in Des Moines, Iowa, greets passengers with this message: "Running for president? Health care better be your priority." Gephardt based his whole campaign strategy on this warning. Gephardt knew he could already count on the support of the industrial unions because of his long record fighting NAFTA and other trade deals. But those unions—think Rust Belt, blue-collar workers who actually make stuff—weren't enough to get him the AFL-CIO's endorsement. To get to the magic two-thirds majority, he needed SEIU, whose members—think urban black and Hispanic janitors, security guards, and nurses—aren't as affected by globalization. "They care about trade, but at the same time they don't see this dogged loyalty to Dick Gephardt because he was with us on NAFTA," says the Democratic labor consultant.

For them, Gephardt came up with the most ambitious and expensive health care plan of all the candidates and unveiled it back in April before New York's SEIU 1199, the union's largest and most influential local. The logic was impeccable: produce a bold health care plan, win over 1199, win over SEIU, win the AFL-CIO endorsement. But, in the end, another issue unexpectedly trumped health care for SEIU: the war. And it helped Dean stand out. ("All the major candidates have pretty comprehensive health care plans and ways to pay for them," says Stern.) A frequent argument heard at SEIU's recent political conference was that the war was choking off scarce resources for government social services, upon which SEIU members disproportionately rely. And some of SEIU's key leaders, who come out of the activist left, strongly opposed intervention in Iraq. One of the earliest and most vociferous SEIU Dean backers was

Dennis Rivera, 1199's president and a leading war opponent. His union took out a full-page ad in *The New York Times* against invading Iraq and bused its members—organized as 1199ers for Peace and Justice—to the big antiwar rallies on the Mall in Washington. The Dean campaign's own liaison to labor is Bob Muehlenkamp, who was formerly the organizing director for 1199 and who earlier this year founded U.S. Labor Against War. In an e-mail pitching Dean to labor activists recently, he noted, "I first became interested in Governor Dean because of his courageous, early opposition to the Iraq war." (It probably didn't hurt Dean that Muehlenkamp's wife is AFL-CIO political director Karen Ackerman, who was instrumental in convincing unions to take Dean seriously earlier this year when they were rushing to sign up with Gephardt.)

THE IMPLICATIONS OF an SEIU endorsement are huge. SEIU is home to many recent Hispanic immigrants and other minorities. Its membership is 28 percent black and Latino, and it represents more immigrant workers than any other union. Coming on top of high-profile African American endorsements from the likes of Jesse Jackson Jr., SEIU's stamp of approval would immediately change the Dean campaign's image as a narrow movement of high-tech, latte-town liberals. And SEIU, which is influential in New Hampshire, the first primary state, as well as in delegate-rich California and New York, will give Dean a large ground force of experienced organizers to complement his own.

And Stern doesn't just bring SEIU with him. His endorsement could be similar to Gerald McEntee's 1992 nod to Bill Clinton. McEntee, president of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), spoke glowingly of Clinton at a critical moment before the primaries started in January 1992; and he also freed local AFSCME to back the Arkansas governor. The move was a severe blow to Tom Harkin, who, like Gephardt today, was a long-time labor ally with deep industrial union support. McEntee opened doors for Clinton's campaign and was seen as a kingmaker.

SEIU's formal endorsement this year could have similar ripple effects. It could be a signal to the few big unions that are still on the fence, like the American Federation of Teachers and the Communications Workers of America, which is leaning toward Dean, that the former Vermont governor is a legitimate candidate worth backing. It could also help Dean with other

party interest groups, since Stern is one of the most influential leaders in Democratic politics. In the post-McCain-Feingold world, much of the power of the DNC has shifted to a collection of liberal umbrella organizations known as 527s. Stern is at the center of three of the most important: Partnership for America's Families, America Coming Together, and America Votes, which together will spend tens—and maybe hundreds—of millions of dollars next year to beat President Bush. Dean could not have found a more powerful ally to help him build the institutional support he now needs.

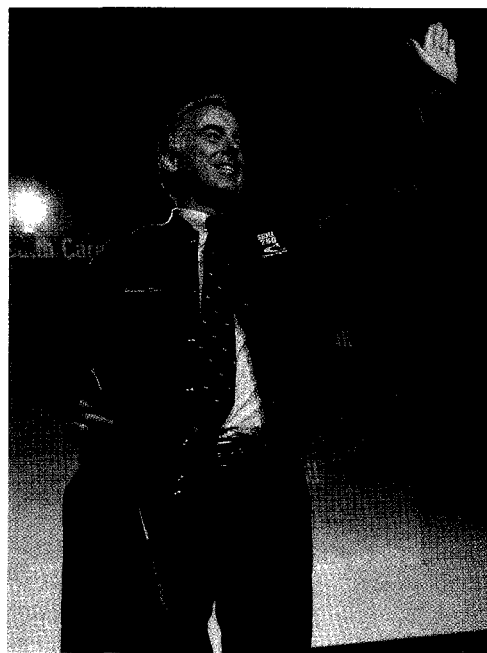
On the other hand, there are downsides to the Dean/SEIU alliance. McEntee, who has flirted with both John Kerry and Wesley Clark, is now taking a serious look at Dean. But McEntee and Stern are fierce rivals, in part because many of Stern's new government-worker members come at AFSCME's expense. The rivalry is so intense that union officials and campaign operatives speculate that McEntee may pull the plug on a potential Dean nod if SEIU embraces the candidate first. "I don't think if Jesus came down and ran for president AFSCME and SEIU would agree on an endorsement," says an aide to one candidate.

Secondly, one of the appeals of the Dean campaign is that its lack of Washington and Democratic interest-group support make it refreshingly un beholden. Dean likes to argue that his army of small donors makes him independent. But he's always been a little too quick to pander to his immediate audience, and now he's in danger of getting further sucked into the interest-group politics of a front-runner. Would he cut government employees to balance the budget, as he's long pledged? Would he support charter schools, or—God forbid—experiment with vouchers now that he's

been endorsed by the California Teachers Association?

Finally, although SEIU expands the Dean coalition in the economic sense, it reinforces the impression that his base of support is overwhelmingly liberal. The service union membership is largely confined to the cities and the coasts, and its leaders tend to be radical, even socialist (although Stern himself is a pragmatist, not an ideologue). Dean is building a powerful base of support among two key liberal demographics—highly educated whites and low-income, minority, service-sector workers. While those groups represent the fastest-growing elements of the Democratic coalition, they don't help him attract white working-class voters—who remain essential to winning in November. Then again, that is a problem Dean's rivals wish they had. ■

*SEIU loves Dean's message of empowerment—
and his opposition to the Iraq war.*



Tehran Dispatch Change Up

BY AFSHIN MOLAVI
AND KARIM SADJADPOUR

SHORTLY AFTER IRAN'S 1979 revolution toppled the Shah, Yasir Arafat turned up in Tehran to celebrate. With Arafat in town, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini announced the Islamic Revolution would march until "the liberation of Jerusalem." Crowds responded with waves of applause. After all, in 1970s Iran, support for the Palestinians had emerged as a litmus test of commitment to the revolutionary ethos. Unsurprisingly, an anti-Israel, pro-Palestinian stance quickly became a central tenet of the Islamic Republic. The government lavished financial support on groups opposing Israel, and the keys to the de facto Israeli embassy in Tehran were turned over to Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization. Across Iran, billboards urging JUSTICE FOR PALESTINE dotted the country, and every major city soon had a "Palestine Square" and a "Palestine Street." State television described suicide bombings as "martyrdom operations." The Iranian government even proclaimed a "Jerusalem day," on which government workers were "encouraged" to take part in protests against the "bloodthirsty Zionist state."

Twenty-four years later, however, Iranian demonstrators are in a vastly different mood. In mid-June, Iranian youths staged a series of large rallies at Tehran University. Amid calls for greater democracy and freedom, one of the more popular slogans was: "Forget about Palestine! Think of us!" These two lines, delivered in rhyming, lilting Persian, encapsulate the sentiments of many young Iranians. In fact, though the West still thinks of Iran as a cauldron of anti-Israel passion, a new generation of pro-democracy Iranians increasingly speaks out against the government's seeming obsession with the Palestinians. And these youths are finding cohorts in an unlikely quarter: a group of senior conservative officials who are beginning to question the utility of Iran's close ties to anti-Israel groups.

IRANIANS UNDER THE age of 30—who comprise more than two-thirds of the population today—express little interest in terrorist groups, anti-Zionism, and radical politics in general. In places where young people congregate, Iranians constantly question their government's support for terrorist groups. "I see the way people look at me when I travel," complained one young Iranian. "Immediate-

ly, they think, 'Watch out for the Iranian, he might be a terrorist.' I blame our government for cultivating this image by supporting radical groups." Meanwhile, on campuses, rumors abound that Palestinian militants and Hezbollah fighters are imported from Gaza and southern Lebanon to help quell recent student unrest—tales that make the groups even more unpopular. Reformist newspapers and reformist clerics have begun questioning Iran's hard-line stance on Israel. Abdollah Nouri, a former Interior minister and close confidant of Khomeini, has bluntly criticized the Islamic Republic's desire to act "more Palestinian than the Palestinians."

This disaffection with the Palestinian cause stems in part from many Iranians' frustration with Iran's economic and political problems. They see Iran's moribund economy partly as a result of the country's embrace of international radicalism, which has damaged foreign business ties. Many students have traded in Che Guevara posters, which used to hang in many dormitories as a sign of commitment to radicalism, for Microsoft ads. At cafés, conversations increasingly revolve around the need to find jobs and the push for more social freedoms, and some even use the disparaging term "Hezbollahi" (a Hezbollah type) to refer to anyone who is radical and violent. Even some older Iranians have grown weary of the Palestinization of foreign policy. At an earthquake site in northern Iran last year, a group of elderly victims complained bitterly about the government's slow response. "If the earthquake occurred in Palestine, they would have sent money and supplies. To us, they only give empty slogans," one said.

Still, reformers and the frustrated populace are too weak to influence official policy, which continues to be dominated by conservatives. But, in the past few months, several senior conservatives have quietly joined the chorus, hinting that Iran's support for terrorist groups opposed to Israel is negotiable. According to one senior conservative official, "Iran's policy in the Middle East and the peace process is not beyond the realm of possibilities that can be discussed, given a dialogue with the United States." Translation from Islamic Republic-speak: We can talk turkey on Israel/Palestine. Sadeq Zibakalam, a Tehran University professor with close ties to conservative officials, underscored this view earlier this year, when he told the U.S.-funded Radio Farda Persian service that Iran understands Washington's concerns about Tehran's support for Hezbollah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad. President Mohammed Khatami, a reformer who has long argued that Iran should not interfere in any agreements made between Israel and the Palestinians, is unlikely to quibble with the conservatives.

WHY HAVE SOME conservatives begun to shift? Pragmatism plays a role. Conservatives are realizing that Iran's sinking economy, which will need to find hundreds of thousands of jobs for its young people, desperately needs foreign investment. As a result, despite claims of Islamic and revolutionary solidarity, Tehran quietly favors pragma-

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BANKING AND FINANCE

One of the most effective weapons in the fight against terrorism is the ability to choke off its financing. Terrorists have learned that one way to finance their operations is by siphoning off funds from contributions meant for humanitarian relief and development projects. Of particular concern to Saudi Arabia are the donations received and distributed by charitable organizations, because charitable giving is one of the basic tenets of Islam. The regulations governing the dissemination of large funds to those in need must defend against the possibility of misappropriation.

As early as 1995, we set up units to counter money laundering at the Ministry of Interior, in the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA) and in our commercial banks. More recently, Saudi Arabia has established a High Commission for oversight of all charities, contributions and donations, as well as a special Financial Intelligence Unit to ensure that funds are not misdirected into the hands of those who would use them to harm others. These regulatory and supervisory agencies have identified potentially problematic activities and enacted a number of changes. For example, no overseas fund transfers are allowed directly from charitable bank accounts, and no ATM cards or credit cards can be issued for these accounts.

We have adopted some of the toughest financial control mechanisms in the world to ensure that our generosity and religious practice cannot be abused. Our nation has completed and submitted two Financial Action Task Force (FATF) self-assessments; one regarding the 40 FATF recommendations on the prevention of money laundering and the other regarding its eight special recommendations on terrorist financing.

Our vigilance has resulted in specific and verifiable actions including:

- In August 2003, the Council of Ministers approved new legislation that puts in place harsh penalties for the crimes of money laundering and terror financing. This legislation stipulates jail sentences of up to 15 years and fines of up to \$1.8 million for offenders.
- In May 2003, the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA) instructed that questionable money transfers be stopped. An update was distributed entitled 'Rules Governing Anti-money Laundering and Combating Terrorist Financing' requiring the full and immediate implementation of nine new policies and procedures.
- In May 2003, Saudi Arabia asked the Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation and all Saudi charities to suspend activities outside Saudi Arabia until mechanisms

are in place to adequately monitor and control funds so they cannot be misdirected to illegal purposes.

- In February 2003, SAMA began to implement a major technical program to train judges and investigators on legal matters involving terror-financing and money-laundering methods, international requirements for financial secrecy, and methods followed by criminals to exchange information.

- In March 2002, the U.S. Treasury Department and Saudi Arabia blocked the accounts of the Somalia and Bosnia branches of the Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation. While the Saudi headquarters for this private charity is dedicated to helping those in need, it was determined that the Somalia and Bosnia branches supported terrorist activities and terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda and AlAI (al-Itihaad al-Islamiya).

Increased oversight and international cooperation have also enabled Saudi Arabia to identify and freeze some 41 bank accounts with suspected links to terrorism. Together with the United States, we have taken steps to freeze the assets of a close bin Laden associate and aide, Wa'el Hamza Julaidan, who is believed to have funneled money to Al-Qaeda.

Saudi Arabia will continue to accelerate its counter-terror activities in coordination with the international community in the War on Terrorism.

"Charitable funds can no longer go outside of Saudi Arabia without strict government oversight and control. We have closed the door on the possibility for charitable giving to be misappropriated for illegal purposes."



Prince Bandar bin Sultan, Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to the United States,
June 12, 2003

"Their [Saudi Arabia's] close oversight of charities to guard against money laundering and terrorist financing sets an example to all countries engaged in the war against terror."



John W. Snow, United States Treasury Secretary
September 17, 2003



THE PEOPLE OF SAUDI ARABIA
Allies Against Terrorism

www.saudiembassy.net

tism above ideology in its foreign policies. Iran has ignored the plight of Kashmiri Muslims in favor of growing rapprochement with India and says nary a word about oppressed Muslims in Chechnya, so as not to offend its ally Russia. Meanwhile, Iranian opposition to Saudi Arabia's repression of its Shia Muslim minority has gone silent since the two countries have grown closer in the past few years.

In all these instances, revolutionary solidarity has been sacrificed for national interest. Now, Tehran might be considering essentially the same formula regarding the Palestinian case: abandoning the Palestinians to cut a deal with the United States. After all, U.S. economic sanctions are due in part to Iran's support for violent groups opposed to Middle East peace and have prevented billions of dollars in potential foreign capital from entering Iran. As Dr. Qassem Sa'adi, a prominent nationalist intellectual, wrote in an open letter in December 2002 to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini, "The Palestinization of Iranian foreign policy has been disastrous to our national interests."

Even former President Hashemi Rafsanjani, one of the harshest critics of Israel in the Islamic Republic, has signed on. Around him has coalesced a small but influential group willing to consider softening Iran's stance on Israel. These conservative pragmatists have been influential in the on-again, off-again back-channel talks between Iranian and American officials in the past year, which sources in both Tehran and Washington say are on again.

Of course, despite this growing pragmatism, the Iranians won't be making an appearance in the Knesset anytime soon. For one thing, many Iranian officials would find it difficult to cut ties with Shia Hezbollah, largely because of the long-held political, familial, and cultural links between Lebanese Shia, pro-Hezbollah clerics and their Iranian counterparts. What's more, Iran's pragmatic conservatives will drive a hard bargain to give up their hard-line position. "From their perspective, it is in the national interests to maintain the relationship [with terror groups], for it's one of their biggest bargaining chips" in any talks with the United States, remarked a Tehran-based observer. "They're not going to give it up for free."

If Iran were to put its anti-Israel stance on the table, what would it expect in return? Most likely, a comprehensive package that would include a security agreement and assurances that Washington would move toward removing sanctions. Iran also wants something intangible: recognition as a regional power. Says Zibakalam: "If the Americans officially recognized a powerful Iran ... the Iranians would see no reason for Iran-U.S. tensions."

Tehran, however, faces a highly suspicious White House—angry about Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program and in little mood to cut an overt, comprehensive deal with the ruling mullahs. Nonetheless, Iran's recent announcement that it will accept a more vigorous nuclear inspections regime may allow back-channel talks between Tehran and Washington to continue.

Still, how Iran views Israel, and how much support it of-

fers to Palestinian groups, will help determine the future of U.S.-Iran talks. What's important for American policymakers to realize is that Tehran has tentatively put its position on the table. "Clearly, our stance on the peace process is of interest to the Americans, and we are prepared to talk about this as well as everything," says a senior Iranian official. And, unlike in the Arab world, where politicians must tread carefully before they make any concessions to Israel or the United States for fear of popular reaction, the youthful "Iranian street" would gladly welcome a less strident stance. ■

Rondonopolis Dispatch Role Reversal

BY GEOFF DYER

TWO DECADES AGO, Rondonopolis was a forlorn farming town in the middle of the vast savanna plain that stretches south of Brazil's Amazon rain forest. The area boasted a few cattle ranches, but almost none were successful. Locals tried their hands at growing rice or corn in the often-stifling heat but enjoyed only modest success.

Drive just outside Rondonopolis today, and the situation is dramatically different. Fields brimming with soya, cotton, and coffee stretch as far as the eye can see. Prosperous farmers cruise around in air-conditioned Ford Ranger pickups, which the town's local dealership is selling fast. Grain harvests are rising each year. The Maggis, a local farming family, have become perhaps the biggest soya farmers in the world. The Maggi family has grown so wealthy that they now fly over the savanna in their personal Lear jet, which is equipped with satellite phones so they can call the Chicago Mercantile Exchange to find out the latest world soybean prices.

At the Cancún trade talks in September, Brazil emerged as a major diplomatic player, opposing further trade liberalization until wealthy countries slashed their subsidies for farmers. That stance prompted condemnations from American officials and commentators, who argued that Brazil was simply seeking to obstruct global trade in an effort to foster solidarity with other Third World peers. But that's not why Brazil made a fuss at Cancún. Throughout the past decade, Brazil has become an agricultural superpower, the result of a little-noticed farming revolution in places like Rondonopolis. And, as it achieves superpower status, Brazil has begun using trade talks to find new markets for

Geoff Dyer is a reporter for THE FINANCIAL TIMES who previously covered Brazil.

HOW DEREGULATION HELPED PUT THE CABLE INDUSTRY INTO

...er forward

Congress did deregulating in 1996. When it deregulated the cable industry, it assumed cable companies to invest in new technologies and services.

Everybody's winning

The cable industry has helped create over half a million new American jobs in the last 10 years.

Thousands of schools receive free educational programming and high-speed Internet service, courtesy of cable companies.

Millions of Americans now get broadband service through their cable companies. And over 2.5 million customers have already signed up for telephone service from their cable companies.

Billions of dollars have flowed into the American high-technology sector from the cable industry.

And perhaps most importantly, cable customers enjoy unprecedented choice and control over the thousands of hours of high-quality entertainment that flow into their homes every week.

When Congress invested in new technologies in 1996

When Congress was considering whether to deregulate the cable industry seven years ago, cable companies promised to invest in new people-pleasing technologies and programming.

More than \$75 billion later, cable customers are enjoying an avalanche of new services.

FROM WIRE TO WIRE

A cable home is quite different from a non-cable home these days. It's more likely to have Video-On-Demand that puts people in complete control of their TV schedules. And it may be enjoying high-speed Internet service that leaves dial-up and DSL in the digital dust.

Add in the clarity of high-definition TV as well as hundreds of new digital video and audio channels... and the totally wired home has arrived.

JOBS, JOBS AND JOBS

Despite the economic challenges that have afflicted other industries, cable companies have helped create over half a million new American jobs in the last 10 years. In fact, from 1990 to 2002, cable accounted for nearly 3% of new jobs in our country.



Cable companies provide educational programming and high-speed Internet service to schools and millions of students.

Last but not least, cable companies pay local franchise fees to local communities.

CRITICS AND VIEWERS LOVE CABLE

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And viewers are voting with their remotes. People are watching cable channels on the networks. And cable news shows viewership.

ONE OF THE BEST ENTERTAINMENT VALUES IN AMERICA

With so much entertainment now available at the touch of a remote, Americans feel that cable is one of the best values in entertainment today.

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THE SAVANNA WHERE Rondonopolis sits, known in Brazil as the *cerrado*, is a vast region roughly the size of Western Europe. In the 1970s, it was largely unused land, farmed or ranched only by a few lonely men and women. But, in the '70s and '80s, the Maggis moved to the region, bought up huge tracts of unused land, and began to cultivate, building their own power plants and other local institutions and thereby avoiding dependency on the unreliable Brazilian state. The Maggis and other pioneers also expanded the town's links to export markets by dredging the Madeira River, which flows into the Amazon, turning it into a viable waterway for shipping. At the same time, Brazilian farmers, backed by government-linked agricultural research organizations, began developing high-yield soya seeds perfect for the *cerrado*'s weather, cotton strains adapted to the tropical climate, and other local innovations. With the right seeds, the hot temperature and steady rainfall of the interior became big advantages, because crops can grow year-round—which is why some areas now produce three separate soybean crops each year.

Meanwhile, as the infrastructure of the *cerrado* began to improve, recent immigrants to Brazil—including Japanese families—started moving to the area, eager to obtain land. They brought with them the notion that the *cerrado* is a place where hard work and a tough, cowboy attitude can lead to fortune—a sharp contrast to other parts of Brazil, where most of the economy is stagnating. Some *cerrado* residents have even adopted the style of the American West. Stetson hats and Wrangler jeans are in demand across the *cerrado*, and rodeo has become one of the region's most popular sports: The U.S. professional rodeo tour now holds events in Brazil.

As a result of these changes, today Brazil's interior has become a globally competitive farming engine. Brazil's grain harvest has doubled in the last decade and is expected to grow by a quarter this year alone, while the country is now one of the world's biggest producers of soya, cotton, orange juice, beef, poultry, and sugar. Last year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture decided to examine Brazilian farming. Its report, released in January, contained startling conclusions. Brazil's farming potential had been "grossly underestimated," it said, and there were "few natural limits to the future expansion" as more people moved to the *cerrado* and began exploiting the land. It estimated that, on top of its existing 42 million hectares of arable land, Brazil could cultivate a further 170 million hectares—a region equivalent to the entire area currently used in the United States for crop production. "It is my personal view that Brazil is going to be the agricultural powerhouse of this century," says Michael Shean, who wrote the report.

In the process of revamping the interior, Brazil's farmers have punctured one of the myths of modern development:

that large-scale agriculture does not fare well in the tropics. They have also turned Brazil from a passive bystander in trade talks into a competitive producer eager to open up new markets. During the last phase of global trade talks in the 1990s, known as the Uruguay round, Brazil adopted a defensive negotiating strategy, maintaining high tariffs and not pushing other nations too hard to remove their farming subsidies. In the last decade, however, Brazil's government has concentrated on tearing down trade barriers—even its own—in order to reach consumers in wealthier countries, thereby boosting exports. Even new President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, a leftist, has embraced free trade in agriculture as the central focus of Brazil's negotiating strategy at the World Trade Organization (WTO). "There has been a huge change in attitudes over the last decade toward international trade," says Marcos Jank, who runs a trade think tank in São Paulo. "We have gone from being passive to having a number of proactive sectors that want to use negotiations to open up new markets."

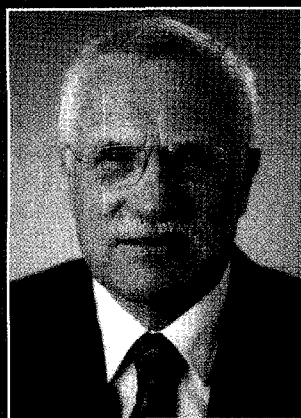
And Brazil is learning how to open those markets the same way the United States and the European Union have: through aggressive negotiations. Brazil has overhauled its diplomatic service, hiring a cadre of young trade negotiators to compete against the armies of diplomats the United States and Europe employ. Brazil has also started using international trade procedures against the big nations—something less developed nations rarely do. Last year, for example, Brazil launched legal challenges at the WTO over U.S. soya and cotton subsidies and EU sugar subsidies.

This strategy climaxed at Cancún, when Brazil organized developing countries into a group called the "G21" and attacked a pre-summit deal on agricultural reform between the United States and the European Union. Brazil and the other G21 countries saw the deal as a half-measure designed to stifle debate on further subsidy cuts. When the United States and Europe refused to budge, the Brazilians held firm, and the talks collapsed.

SINCE CANCÚN, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick has unleashed a series of diatribes against Brazilian trade policy: According to *The New York Times*, "Zoellick called Brazil the leader of the 'won't do' countries." But Brazil was merely trying to open markets for its bountiful agricultural exports, much as the United States has done. And, in the years to come, its determination to open markets will only grow as its agricultural prowess expands. Among the Brazilian government's current plans is the development of a new route west, to Peru, that would give Brazilian farmers direct access to Pacific ports. The government also plans to pave the BR-163, the 600-mile-long dirt road that links the interior with a port near the mouth of the Amazon, making it passable during the rainy season.

Inevitably, Brazil's farmers will demand that their government press harder for access to Western markets. In fact, unless the United States dumps its farm subsidies, Brazil

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may refuse to sign a free-trade agreement uniting all the nations of the Western Hemisphere (except Cuba), an agreement strongly supported by the Bush administration. Just last week, Brazilian leader Lula visited Argentina, where he signed a statement of intent pledging that the two countries would work together to fight for their agricultural interests. Washington may not like to see Brazil become such a powerful negotiating partner, but, sooner or later, it's going to happen—if it hasn't already. ■

Jerusalem Dispatch Fenced In

BY YOSSI KLEIN HALEVI

THE FENCE THAT Israel is building along the length of the West Bank should appall me. Fencing in the Jewish state, after all, mocks Zionism's promise to free the Jews from the ghetto. And fencing out the Arab world violates the hope that Israel will one day find a cultural and spiritual place in the Middle East—a hope that once took me on a yearlong pilgrimage into mosques in Israel and the West Bank, as a way of connecting to my neighbors' prayer lives. The fence ends more than three decades of Israeli attempts to reach out to the Middle East, from the "open bridges" policy across the Jordan River in the 1970s to the "good fence" on the northern border in the 1980s, through which Lebanese workers daily crossed into Israel. Finally, as a Jordanian acquaintance sympathetic to Israel recently warned me, the fence actually reduces Israel's deterrence by sending a message of weakness to the Arab world, reinforcing the popular Arab notion that Israel's demise is just a matter of time.

The argument for the fence, of course, is that it will save lives. The fence won't offer the total separation from Palestinians that Israelis crave: About 200,000 Palestinians in Jerusalem and several tens of thousands of West Bank Palestinians could remain on the Israeli side, and at least 20,000 settlers, or 10 percent of the settler population, will find themselves on the wrong side of the fence. Nor will the fence offer absolute security: Breaches will be pried open and tunnels dug underneath the barrier; recently, snipers crawled through a drainage ditch under the fence and killed a child on a road within pre-1967 Israel. Conversely, the more successful the fence becomes against attacks into Israel, the more terrorists will turn against the settlers living on their side of the barrier—and the more pressure will grow within Israel to evacuate those settlements under fire, a move that would further reduce Israeli deterrence by granting victory to terrorism. Still, the security argument is

compelling enough: Though more than 120 successful suicide bombers have crossed into Israel from the West Bank, not one has managed to cross from Gaza, which is surrounded by the same kind of formidable fence.

Beyond the security argument, though, what's appealing about the fence is precisely what Israeli officials are trying to deny: its political message. Even more than a separation between Israelis and Palestinians, the fence is a demarcation line between the Oslo era of Israeli delusions and the post-Oslo era of Israeli realism. The fence embodies the lesson of this war: that the violent Palestinian rejection of peace three years ago wasn't merely a setback on the way to a comprehensive settlement but the negation of a comprehensive settlement. September 2000 was an historic turning point as decisive as November 1947, when the Arab world rejected U.N. partition. To insist otherwise is to risk repeating the Oslo syndrome of Palestinian deception and Israeli self-deception. And that's precisely what happened recently with the Geneva Accord, a bit of freelance diplomacy between left-wing Israelis, who obviously don't speak for the Sharon government, and Palestinians linked to Yasir Arafat. Even as Israelis who participated in these negotiations were heralding the Palestinians' renunciation of the right of return, Kadoura Fares, a Palestinian delegate to the talks, was reassuring his people that he had done no such thing. Indeed, to expect Arafat's regime to uphold its commitments is absurd. The fence, then, is Israel's acknowledgment that the Palestinian leadership—in this generation at least—won't honor any commitments to respect Israel's legitimacy.

The main objection to the fence, which is scheduled for completion in 2005, is that it doesn't adhere to the pre-1967 green line but deviates "deep" into the West Bank. In fact, at most points, the fence either winds close to the green line or extends several miles over it without compromising Palestinian territorial contiguity—hardly the massive land grab warned against by opponents. So far, 108 miles of fence have been completed in the northwestern part of the West Bank, and about 1.5 percent of the West Bank has been incorporated into the Israeli side. If the fence is eventually extended to include Ariel—a town of 18,000 residents, which the Camp David negotiations included within the eventual borders of Israel—it will protrude, finger-shaped, about 15 miles into the territories. Yet even then the fence will encompass only a few percentage points of the West Bank. (The highest figure I've encountered is 10 percent.) And, note Israeli officials, the fence can be moved or even dismantled.

Still, that apologetic argument misses the point, which is that the fence *must* violate the green line. Building the fence on the 1967 border would play into the Palestinian strategy by creating the outlines of a de facto Palestinian state in all of the West Bank, without requiring the Palestinians to cease terrorism or genuinely recognize Israel. Building over the green line, by contrast, reminds Palestinians that every time they've rejected compromise—whether

in 1937, 1947, or 2000—the potential map of Palestine shrinks. That message is the exact opposite of the left-wing trajectory of increased concessions under fire—from Camp David to Taba to Geneva. The fence is a warning: If Palestinians don't stop terrorism and forfeit their dream of destroying Israel, Israel may impose its own map on them. Indeed, the fence is a reminder that the 1967 border isn't sacrosanct. Legally, the West Bank is extraterritorial: The international community didn't recognize Jordan's annexation, and, because Palestine isn't being restored but invented, its borders are negotiable.

The only justification for withdrawal to the green line is pragmatism. Most Israelis would accept an approximate withdrawal to the 1967 borders in exchange for genuine Palestinian acceptance of Jewish sovereignty on this land. Reinstating the green line, then, would be a reward for peace, not war. But what we've learned in the decade since Oslo began is that "land for peace" was never an option. At best, Israel was being offered land for a cease-fire. And that is hardly justification for returning to the precarious 1967 lines.

That's especially true for Jerusalem. The Oslo negotiations left the fate of Jerusalem for last, assuming that the joint administering of this fragile city would require a level of trust between Palestinians and Israelis possible only after a prolonged process of reconciliation. Precisely the opposite has happened. Thanks, ironically, to Oslo, which subjected the Palestinians to a decade of Palestinian Authority propaganda glorifying hatred of Israel—in schools, mosques, and the media—Palestinians are far less prepared for peace than they were before Oslo. The result of Palestinian hatred and Israeli mistrust is that sharing the administration of Jerusalem has become untenable. Imagine the effect on the Jewish presence within the Old City today, for example, if Palestinian police were positioned on its walls. "Sharing" Jerusalem means dismembering it. A fence around Jerusalem, then, isn't only a buffer against suicidal terrorists but against suicidal blueprints.

PALESTINIANS HAVE BEGUN calling the fence "The Apartheid Wall." In fact, it is neither apartheid nor a wall. The first surprise in encountering the fence is that it really is a fence. Except for about five miles of concrete wall near the West Bank cities of Tulkarem and Qalqilya, which is necessary to prevent sniper attacks on an adjacent Israeli highway, the projected 370-mile barrier is an electrified fence mounted with surveillance cameras and flanked by trenches and barbed-wire pyramids.

The second surprise is the similarity of the landscape on either side of the fence, especially in the area known as the "Triangle," the mostly Arab-populated area of pre-1967 Israel bordering the West Bank and parallel to the coastal plain. On both sides are white stone houses, olive groves, and minarets; the only difference is that the houses and fields in the Arab-Israeli towns and villages are larger and

more prosperous. The fence, then, doesn't separate Arabs and Jews but primarily Palestinians and Israelis—Israeli Arabs as well as Jews. One of the most common complaints about the fence that I've heard from Israeli Jews, on the left as well as the right, is that it leaves the Triangle, which is the center of Arab-Israeli Islamic fundamentalism, within Israel's borders.

Separating West Bank Palestinians from Israeli Palestinians is, in fact, a crucial by-product of the fence. Throughout the 1990s, tens of thousands of West Bank Palestinians illegally crossed into Israel and are living in Arab communities in the Triangle and the Galilee. Frustrating that silent "return" is an essential part of Israel's struggle to maintain its Jewish majority. And it's one of the reasons, according to Israeli Defense Ministry Director-General Amos Yaron, that Palestinian leaders are so outraged by the fence.

Certainly, the fence causes serious hardship to many Palestinians. According to B'Tselem, the Israeli human rights organization, the fence will cause economic or social dislocation for some 200,000 Palestinians. The fence will separate farmers from their lands in 36 villages. Israel is trying to minimize the damage. It has built 41 "agricultural gates" along the fence exclusively for the use of farmers. And the army has replanted olive trees uprooted by the fence. But those efforts don't compensate for a brutal reality. Palestinian farmers trying to get to their fields complain of complications at the gates, including an inability to bring in trucks on which to load large quantities of crops.

Still, the fence is hardly a case of the many suffering for the terrorism of the few. The war against Israel was initiated by the official Palestinian leadership with overwhelming popular support. According to one poll, 75 percent of Palestinians backed the recent suicide attack on Haifa's Maxim restaurant, which murdered three generations of two Jewish families and five Israeli Arabs. In its very ugliness—a scar across an often-pastoral landscape—the fence is an apt expression of the Palestinians' grotesque war. Palestinian society has been overtaken by a culture whose deepest longing isn't for the creation of a state of its own but the destruction of the state of its neighbors. Indeed, according to another recent poll, 59 percent of Palestinians want to see terrorism against Israel continue even after the creation of a Palestinian state. The very hardships imposed by the fence are part of its message: When one society declares war against another society, there's a price to pay.

And if a miracle happens and reconciliation becomes possible? Then, indeed, the fence can be moved or uprooted. The Berlin Wall, as Palestinian spokesmen remind us, did eventually fall. And a fence, after all, isn't even a wall. ■

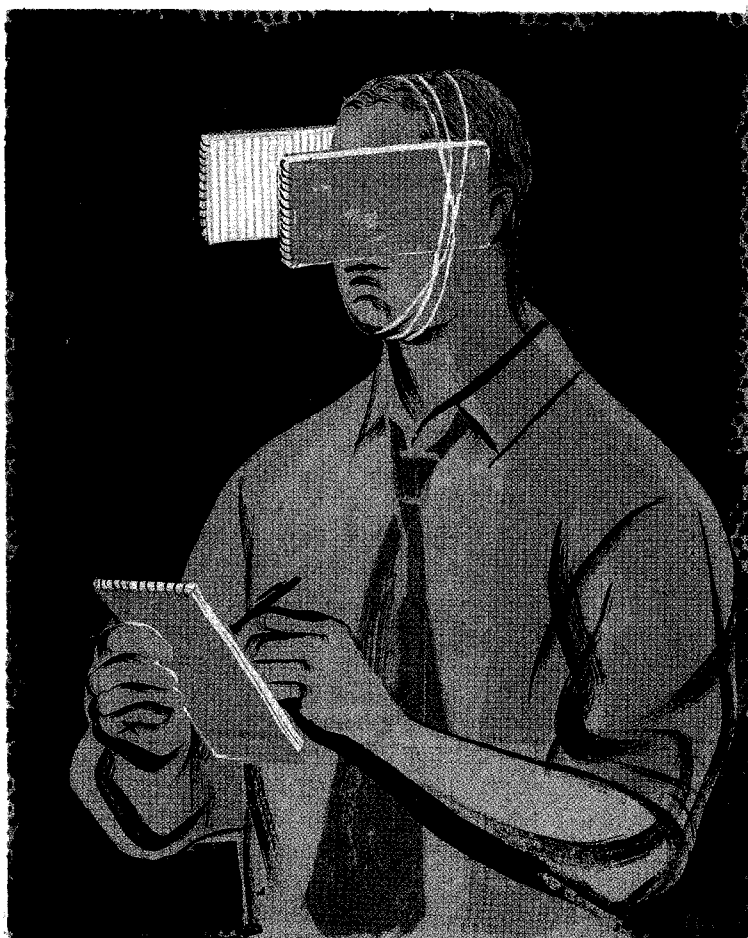
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How political journalists get the story wrong.

Bad Press

BY JONATHAN CHAIT



*Stephen Glass and Jayson Blair get the attention.
But journalism has another big problem.*

THERE'S NOTHING QUITE like a serial fabricator to get the attention of journalistic scolds. Even if a movie about my former friend and colleague Stephen Glass weren't coming out this week, the big minds of journalism might still be talking about Jayson Blair, *The New York Times* reporter unmasked as a fabricator earlier this year. And, if they weren't talking about Glass or Blair, they might be talking about *The Boston Globe's* Mike Barnicle and *The Washington Post's* Janet Cooke, whose journalistic frauds brought shame upon their own respective institutions. "Unfortunately, we can go on and on with such exam-

ples," E.R. Shipp wrote in *The Washington Post* this spring, after rehearsing the now-familiar litany of media malfeasance. "All of these journalists got ahead by appearing to play the game better than the rest—but only, it turns out, by violating the rules of the game."

Famous journalistic malefactors are a perfectly worthy topic for introspection, since they undermine the credibility of all reporters. It's also perfectly worthy—in fact, utterly necessary—for institutions to change policies and procedures to thwart future scandals, as the *Times* did this week when it hired its first-ever "public editor," who will act as an internal journalistic watchdog and reader advocate. But, while horrifying and compelling, fabricators tell us little about the overwhelming majority of reporters who don't make up characters, invent quotes, or pretend to be places they never were. Most journalists really do report the facts—or at least make a good-faith effort to do so.

Unfortunately, these good-faith efforts don't always produce good journalism. And nowhere is this more true than in Washington. Thanks to a handful of bad habits, some good intentions gone awry, and a new breed of politicians adept at exploiting these vulnerabilities, today's political reporters routinely provide the public with misleading, sometimes wholly inaccurate coverage of public policy and the officials who make it. Everything from the future of Social Security to the war on terrorism depends on accurate political reporting. Yet this epidemic of bad political coverage has sparked little soul-searching within the national news establishment itself—perhaps because the trouble isn't that journalists are getting the facts wrong, it's that they're getting the story wrong.

BIAS

THE MOST COMMON (and familiar) complaint against political reporters is also the most misunderstood: that the press has an inherently liberal bias. The accusation goes back at least 30 years to Richard Nixon, who believed (not entirely without reason) that the elite press was out to get him. Since then, the right has created its own set of media outlets to counter the per-

ceived tilt left. Last year, Bernard Goldberg's book *Bias*, an extended diatribe on this very subject, rose to the top of *The New York Times* best-seller list and was seen tucked under President Bush's arm as he walked across the White House lawn. The tenet that the media are unfairly liberal remains a defining belief of contemporary American conservatism. Just this month, for example, when newspapers were carrying articles about Arnold Schwarzenegger's groping of women, Rush Limbaugh's addiction to painkillers, and the Bush administration's apparent outing of a CIA agent, *Washington Post* media reporter Howard Kurtz summed up conservatives' reaction thusly: "FOR THE RIGHT, BAD NEWS DAY OR MEDIA BIAS?; CONSERVATIVES SEE MORE THAN COINCIDENCE IN RECENT SCOOPS."

It's undeniably true that reporters' personal views tend to be liberal. A 1996 poll, for instance, showed 89 percent of Washington reporters voted for Bill Clinton in 1992. What's not so clear is how these biases affect coverage. Most journalists insist their commitment to evenhandedness—a gospel spread by the likes of *Washington Post* editor Len Downie, who refused even to vote because it affirmed partisan feelings—makes their personal philosophies irrelevant. Conservatives, in turn, scoff at this notion, saying that liberals could never put aside their own predilections so easily.

The likely truth is that liberal bias does affect news coverage, but not always in the ways conservatives suspect. For one thing, the elite media are not merely liberal. They're, well, elite. They share the priorities of the educated classes—liberal on social issues but not necessarily on economics. So, while reporters are more likely to portray anti-abortion or anti-gay rights activists as out of the mainstream than pro-choice or pro-gay rights activists, they dismissively characterize enormously popular programs like Medicare and Social Security as "entitlements" and portray politicians who defend them from cuts as practicing "demagoguery." (As *Newsweek* asserted in 2000, "The Democrats' most tried-and-true weapon was to demagogue Social Security.") Similarly, when Democrats complain about inequality, mainstream reporters and pundits frequently describe it along the lines that Tim Russert did in 2002, when he posed a question about "the whole class warfare issue that's being raised by the Democrats"—a term they would never use to describe any Republican policy, even one that very clearly advantages one class over another.

Another surprising thing about liberal bias is that it manifests itself not so much in outright hostility toward conservatism—although there's some of that—but as simple bewilderment that, in turn, fosters misleading coverage. If you're an Ivy League-educated reporter or an editor living in the Boston-Washington corridor—in other words, if you're part of that class of people who set the tone for political coverage—you probably don't know many true conservatives. Indeed, conservatism may strike you as a completely alien ideology.

Over the years, conservatives have learned to take ad-

vantage of this confusion. And nobody has done it better than George W. Bush. From the day he began running for president, Bush and his handlers grasped the superficiality of the national press corps. "I do think [the media] are biased against conservative thought," he told *National Review* in 1999, "and the reason is that they think conservative thinkers are not compassionate people ... that's one of the reasons I've attached a moniker to the philosophy I espouse." And Bush didn't simply call himself a "compassionate conservative"; he tried to act like one, constantly professing deep concern for the poor and surrounding himself with minorities.

From the perspective of the right, there's nothing strange about an affable conservative who cares about the poor. Nor should there be; for plenty of conservatives, the sentiment is genuine. But reporters treated such traits as evidence that Bush didn't actually support very conservative policies—something he very clearly did. Bush would, as *USA Today* put it, "govern from the center, rejecting the shrill conservative absolutism that turned off swing voters after Republicans won control of Congress in 1994." Of course, this was precisely what the Bush campaign hoped to do: It was trying to convey the impression that it wouldn't depart too dramatically from the popular policies of the Clinton administration. But the media was (unintentionally) complicit in Bush's ideological sleight of hand.

STORYLINES

ONCE THE NEWS media has settled on a perception of a political figure, it becomes nearly impossible to dislodge. One reason is that the evidentiary standards for a piece of "news" drop if that news seems to fit a preconceived pattern. In 1988, for instance, reporters decided that GOP vice-presidential nominee Dan Quayle was stupid. Quayle certainly was not a brilliant man, but plenty of politicians with equally mediocre minds do not have their intellect savaged the way Quayle did. Part of the reason Quayle couldn't shake his reputation was that any tiny gaffe he committed became national news. In 1992, famously, he instructed a student at a spelling bee to add an "e" to the end of "potato." This incident was emblazoned in the public mind as a symbol of Quayle's stupidity. Few reporters noted, however, that when he uttered the fateful phrase, Quayle was looking at an instruction card that spelled the word "potatoe."

Sometimes reporters reinforce perceptions that they themselves created, and sometimes they merely act as conduits for political attacks generated by the opposition. Earlier this year, rival campaigns attacked Democratic candidate Wesley Clark for having praised Republicans. Once that storyline had been established, anything that came remotely close to confirming it was deemed newsworthy—even if a cursory examination revealed otherwise. Last week, *Time* magazine breathlessly reported that Clark had praised Bush in January 2002 for his handling of the war in

Afghanistan. Never mind that every major Democrat supported the war in Afghanistan and that, four months after September 11, 2001, most were trying to retain a united front with Bush on foreign policy.

One presidential election ago, it was the early attacks on Al Gore's veracity—attacks, for the most part, without basis—that turned a perfectly reasonable statement into a politically damaging mini-controversy. A month before the election, *The New York Times* took Gore to task because he seemed to invent a story about school crowding: "Mr. Gore stood by his decision in the debate to illustrate the problem of school crowding by speaking of a 15-year-old girl in Sarasota, Fla., who had to stand in class. In fact, school officials have said, the girl was without a desk for only one day." The truth is that Gore was citing a newspaper article about classroom crowding that was true when it was written, but the problem had been subsequently rectified by school officials. But, days later, there was the *Times* duly reporting on the controversy over Gore's truthfulness—"As the nominees prepare for their encounter in Winston-Salem, N.C., it is Mr. Gore who faces the most scrutiny as he tries not to say or do anything that will cement an image that he puffs up stories and is not to be trusted"—as if the "scrutiny" had somehow appeared on its own.

President Bush, too, has suffered from established media storylines. Only because Bush has an image of being indifferent—if not downright hostile—to the environment did it become front-page news when he postponed a regulation raising the allowable amount of arsenic in water. The merits of the arsenic regulation were highly debatable: A paper by the Brookings Institution and the American Enterprise Institute estimated that the regulation would cost an astronomical \$65 million per life saved.

OBJECTIVITY

FOR ALL THE talk about the importance of objectivity, reporters are surprisingly willing to express their opinions openly when it comes to matters of pure politics. In 1997, when Gore defended fundraising calls he made from the White House by explaining the technical aspects of campaign finance laws, *The New York Times* reported that Gore's defense was "widely derided as self-righteous and unconvincing." Other news outlets offered similar accounts, yet it's not clear exactly who was widely deriding it, other than the Republicans, of course, and journalists themselves. Apparently, because something like Gore's performance is a matter of subjective interpretation, reporters feel relatively free to state their own views as fact.

Yet, when it comes to real matters of fact—that is, things that involve figures, dates, actual events—reporters frequently take the opposite approach. They are evenhanded to a fault, presenting every side of an argument as equally valid, even if one side uses demonstrably false information and the other doesn't. Bush has exploited this tendency

ruthlessly, most memorably in 2000, when he described his tax cut as consuming a mere quarter of the projected budget surplus. "I think it's right that one-quarter of the surplus go back to the people who pay the bills," he said in September of that year. Bush's own figures showed his tax cut would reduce the estimated \$4.6 trillion surplus by \$1.6 billion, or about a third. But reporters failed to point this out, let alone weave it into a narrative of Bush's mendacity.

During the same period, Democrats cited analyses—using models developed by nonpartisan economists at the Treasury Department—showing that Bush's tax cut would give more than 40 percent of its benefits to the wealthiest 1 percent of taxpayers. Bush responded with an analysis of his own showing that his tax cut would give a mere 22 percent to the top 1 percent. But Bush's analysis—or, more precisely, his economic flunkies' analysis—arrived at this number by excluding the elimination of the estate tax and the top income tax cuts, the very elements that most benefited the rich. In other words, Bush's "analysis" was a deliberate and obvious sham. But the press treated it as legitimate. As *The New York Times* reported, "the richest 1 percent of taxpayers would get between 22 percent and 45 percent of the tax benefits, depending on how the calculations are done."

This bizarre approach to policy reporting effectively rewards dishonesty. What's the point of a politician telling the truth if even the elite press will simply throw up their hands and fail to distinguish between truth and falsity?

IMAGE CONSCIOUSNESS

POLITICAL COVERAGE is also hampered by the assumption that there is some relationship between the emphasis a politician gives to an idea and its actual importance. President Clinton took great advantage of this during his second term, when he proposed a series of micro-initiatives with enormous popular appeal. Issues like school uniforms and giving cell phones to neighborhood patrols all garnered strong support in polls and helped bolster Clinton's popularity, even though they affected few people and committed only symbolic levels of government money. The media had to cover these issues when Clinton spoke about them, invariably making them seem larger and more important than they really were.

Bush has elevated this trick to new heights. He bolsters his image as a "compassionate conservative" by regularly proposing moderate-sounding initiatives. His support for higher levels of federal education spending, allowing low-income families to deduct charitable contributions from their taxes, and boosting funding for global AIDS efforts gobbled up widespread press coverage. When he unveiled his budget in 2001, for example, a front-page *New York Times* headline blared, "FIRST BUSH BUDGET PROPOSES TO RAISE AID FOR EDUCATION"; his promise of more AIDS funding during the 2003 State of the Union won Bush headlines like "AIDS ADVOCATES PRAISE BUSH'S \$15 BILLION PROPOSAL" from *USA Today*. Later, though, it turned out Bush was proposing to

increase education funding by only half the 11.5 percent he'd promised. Instead of asking Congress for \$3 billion in AIDS money, as he'd vowed to do, he actually requested just \$2 billion—then fought efforts by Congressional Democrats to fulfill the original promise. And, while Bush continues to talk up the role of charity, he quietly allowed the charitable tax deduction to die so he could use the money instead for other tax cuts.

It's true that when Bush breaks his promises, the press duly reports it. But Bush's words command far more attention than his deeds. Part of the reason for this is mechanical. A Bush announcement is the province of the White House press corps, whose reportage is generally deemed the most newsworthy. Legislative arcana is the turf of less prestigious congressional reporters. So, when Bush announces a new, "compassionate" initiative, the story makes a big splash on the evening news. When it dies in Congress, the story ends up in the back pages of the newspaper. As a result, if Bush wants to portray himself as prioritizing education, the media usually complies, regardless of how clearly his subsequent actions undermine the storyline.

MONEY AND POLITICS

ONE OF THE most important domestic political stories in Washington over the past decade has been the Republican Party's efforts to pry U.S. business from its role as a bipartisan influence (for good or, more often, for ill) and turn it into a full-fledged partner of the GOP. The policy goals of the Republican Party and U.S. business are now synchronized to an extent not seen since the Progressive era—in part because leading Republicans, like House Majority Leader Tom DeLay, have threatened interest groups that continue to pursue good relationships with both parties. As Nicholas Confessore wrote in a long, reported piece for *The Washington Monthly* this summer, Republicans now expect lobbyists to support them all the time, even on issues of ancillary concern. In return, Republicans will take unpopular positions on issues like the environment and health care that benefit those same lobbyists.

Yet this enormous shift, which impacts much of the domestic agenda, has not been woven into the narrative of political journalism. That omission, too, stems from the strange conventions of Washington reporting. It's not that journalists fail to report on business influence; it's just that such reportage tends to get segregated.

One place it lands is the lobbying beat. Earlier this month, *The Washington Post* ran an incisive story explaining the links between Wall Street—which has donated enormous sums to Bush's reelection campaign—and administration policies, such as cutting the dividend tax, which benefit those donors. Yet, when the dividend tax itself was being debated, such links barely rated a mention in the *Post* or anywhere else. It's not that the press is shilling for Wall Street fat cats. It's that money in politics is its own, distinct beat

with its own, dedicated reporter (or set of reporters). And so stories about politics and policy read as if Washington were unsullied by money and advocates of ending the dividend tax pushed the idea through by force of reason alone.

Another enclave of superb, but underexposed, coverage about the relationship between lobbyists and policy is the financial press. *The Wall Street Journal*, for example, has covered the nexus between K Street and the GOP particularly well. And shortly after the 2002 elections, the *Post* business section ran a terrific piece observing that "it's payback time for the distributors and other business groups whose pent-up demands for policy changes, large and small, will soon burst into public." The reason financial reporters can be so blunt, and therefore accurate, is that they could not do their job—conveying information about which businesses are succeeding in winning legislation that will impact their bottom line—if they didn't convey the unvarnished truth. Political reporters play by a different set of rules. If a story like that ran on page one, it would have to be filtered through the lens of "evenhandedness"—"Democrats charge that Republicans are carrying water for their donors; Republicans disagree"—even if one side were demonstrably wrong. That's why the practice of unbiased reporting, as journalists understand it, can actually impede the truth.

IT MAY SEEM predictable that a liberal would suggest that the deficiencies of the media coincide so often with the p.r. triumphs of George W. Bush. Yet there is a reason for this. Unlike Ronald Reagan, Bush came to office at a time when the voters preferred most Democratic positions on domestic policy. (In a spring 2000 poll asking how they would like to divvy up the budget surplus, cutting taxes finished fourth with a mere 14 percent, behind shoring up Social Security, spending on other federal programs, and paying down the national debt.) Bush has aligned himself with a small but powerful economic minority, relying on its financial muscle to compensate for its lack of a popular mandate. That Bush lacks support for his economic agenda doesn't make him wrong—to be popular is not to be virtuous. But the brutal fact is that the success of Bush's agenda depends upon the media failing to convey it to the public in a clear-eyed way. It's not the media's job to warn the public of the dangers posed by Bush—that's for his opponents to do. It is, however, the job of the media to impart the truth. Their failure has been his victory.

But this is the sort of failure few in the media wish to investigate. Journalistic self-flagellation is easier when the culprits are a few extravagant malefactors. It's harder when the problem is the basic conventions of political journalism itself. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS Dooms, Real and Fake

SO MUCH OF THE COMMENT ON *SYLVIA* has focused on the biography and poetry of Sylvia Plath that the reader might not know that this is an especially well-made film. Christine Jeffs has directed it with discretion and intimacy, almost a paradoxical privacy. John Toon's cinematography distills the flavors of the English and American locations, and Tariq Anwar has edited with a succinct eye. The music by Gabriel Yared is a bit lush, but it provides a continuum on which the film can rest when it pauses to ponder.

The cast is first-class. In the lesser roles, Blythe Danner (in fact Gwyneth Paltrow's mother) gives Sylvia's mother tacit authority; Jared Harris is sympathetic as the literary critic who champions Sylvia; and Michael Gambon does his usual messy magic as her downstairs London neighbor. The two leading performances crown the work. I don't remember seeing Daniel Craig before, and I had the improbable thought that he had been held in reserve through the years in order to play Ted Hughes. The darkness, the sad anger, the affectionate impatience, the sense that what we see at any moment is only a wisp of the immensity within—all these are Craig's gifts to the role. Gwyneth Paltrow's performance as Sylvia is in a tangential way another proof of Jeffs's ability. Paltrow has exceptional talent, but her use of it seems to depend on a director's guidance. In *Shakespeare in Love*, John Madden brought her gifts to full flower; in *Possession*, Neil LaBute did very nearly as well. (May the minor Paltrow efforts rest in peace.) In *Sylvia*, Jeffs has helped Paltrow to complete conviction. Incursion is the key.

At the start, in 1956, Sylvia is an

American graduate student at Cambridge, seemingly normal except that, as she later tells Hughes, she had made a suicide attempt a few years earlier. As the years crowd by in England and America, as her marriage to Hughes and their two children alter her life, as her poetry appears, the worm of insecurity

in her gnaws away. We see Sylvia overcome by it. Ted's poetry brings him glamour and fame; attractive women cluster, and Sylvia folds in on herself with jealousy. Her confidence in her person—quite distinct from her poetic

gift, which is warmly praised—shivers and cracks. Sylvia's life, as understood and embodied by Paltrow, is a chronicle of neurosis metastasizing like cancer. It ends with her calm suicide in 1963, her children safely stowed in the next room.

This whole picture is so intelligently considered that its very quality is the strongest argument for its existence. The overarching question for every biographical film about an artist is: why? Why was it needed? Does *Sylvia* enlighten us in any way about Plath's poetry (called an "irresistible blaze" by Robert Lowell)? Or about the writing of it? Obviously not. Just as obviously, she would not be the subject of a film if her life had been tranquil or if her internal descent had occurred in a woman less expected in the popular view to be nutty—say, a computer expert or a physician. Obviously, too, the film cannot tell us remotely as much about Plath's life as the large literature about her (though there are no gross grievances about the facts).

Why, then, are film biographies of artists made? The only sound answer for me is that they supply good parts for actors. Sometimes the role is poorly written (Chopin in *A Song to Remember*), sometimes the performance is thin (Charlton

Heston's Michelangelo in *The Agony and the Ecstasy*), but when a decently written role and a good actor coalesce, the film is justified. No one can learn more about Iris Murdoch's writing and writing mind from *Iris* than is in her books, but I would not want to have missed the acting of the role by Kate Winslet as the younger Iris and Judi Dench as the later one. One of my favorites in the field is *Stevie*, about the English poet Stevie Smith, because of Glenda Jackson's unforgettable grainy-humorous performance. By now we might fantasize that, out there in the infinite, there is a procession of twins—the actual person and an actor's embodiment of her or him. I wonder if this is confusing to spectators in the hereafter.

The bio-film process continues. John Brownlow, who wrote the admirable screenplay of *Sylvia*, is working on a film about Christopher Marlowe.

The comment about *KILL BILL-VOL. 1* is, in its way, amusing. No one holds back on descriptions of the violence in it, the amputations and decapitations, the flood of blood, but then come the rationalizations. Tarantino, we are told yet again, had his education in a video shop. He gobbled all sorts of film voraciously and chose the bucket-of-blood dish as his favorite. All this is told in a mildly sardonic way, but then comes the statement that to this juvenile material Tarantino has brought exceptional skill. The barbarities are admitted but are accepted because he does them so well. These comments seem to me roundabout apologies for (let's call it) the video-shop streak left in the apologists. "Let us all chuckle maturely at Tarantino," they seem to be saying, "and underneath the chuckle, let us revel."

Kill Bill-Vol. 1 (another chunk of it is coming next spring) is different from its Tarantino predecessors. *Reservoir Dogs* had compressive unity. *Pulp Fiction* had humor and development. *Jackie Brown* had a plot. *Kill Bill* is a series of fights, little more. A woman called the Bride is left for dead in a massacre of her wedding party in Texas. (No reason given.) She recovers and sets out for vengeance on the assassins, a group headed by

SYLVIA
(Focus)
KILL BILL-VOL. 1
(Miramax)

someone named Bill. (I'd bet that Tarantino first thought of the title, then thought up material to employ it.) This quest for vengeance takes her, with sequences in black-and-white and in animation, from Texas to Japan. Uma Thurman plays the Bride, but she has no acting to do—only physical exploits for which she must have trained hard. Except for Thurman's name, Tarantino could have used any good-looking female athlete in the part, along with the same stunt doubles.

Questions about how the Bride got the money for her activities and how she acquired her skill with the samurai sword are pointless. The really relevant

defect of this thriller is that it isn't scary. The scene in *Reservoir Dogs* with the cop strapped to the chair was upsetting, as were some sequences in *Pulp Fiction*. But when the Bride is in a large Japanese hall surrounded by about thirty men advancing on her with swords, and she destroys them all with her sword, it isn't frightening—it's ludicrous.

Yet something looms out of this gargantuan mess, and probably will do so even more clearly after *Vol. 2*. From this welter of violence and its enormous success, a prophecy emerges. Having fulfilled what are apparently the only two requirements, Quentin Tarantino will be the next governor of California. ■

LEE SIEGEL ON TELEVISION Rise and Shine

TO SLEEP, PERCHANCE TO dream—but either way not to worry about having something to tune in to when you wake up. The first network morning show—the prototype of *The Today Show*, and *Good Morning America*, and *The Early Show*—appeared in 1952 on NBC, with Dave Garroway as host and with a clown covering the weather. ABC followed suit with its own wake-up program in 1975; seven years later CBS joined the game, though it had to push *Captain Kangaroo* out of its matutinal slot for the purpose. At the moment, eleven million Americans roll out of bed and flip on the three networks combined.

The rising numbers, or so the experts opine, are partly due to an increase in working hours, and partly to a more health-conscious population, which awakens earlier to make time for calisthenics. The growing popularity of morning television might even be owed to the heightened American nervousness about “reality”: the prospect of spending eight to ten hours with real, live, untelevised and uncontrollable humans makes more and more people hasten back as fast as they can into the tube world in which they happily concluded the previous evening. But perhaps the morning shows satisfy an even deeper need. It may be that Katie and Matt, Diane and Charles, Harry and Julie and René and Hannah,

have proved Hegel right. Yes, Hegel. He said that the modern person's daily prayer was reading the newspaper. Nowadays it's the well-scrubbed, early rising, up-to-the-minute, endlessly knowing and smiling anchorpeople who preside over matins and lead you, if you so desire, through the crosses and contradictions you may meet in the course of the day, and out of the dangers and the perils of the night before. Those last two clauses are, respectively, from the Catholic and the Anglican morning prayer. Here endeth the lesson. Now go forth and earneth and feebleth and consume.

Of course the morning programs exist on several levels: they are news, they are information, they are (even when they are news and information) entertainment. It is interesting that these programs, with their interviews and their musical numbers and their bits of comedy, resemble the kind of variety show you used to find on evening television fifty years ago, as if social life had become so accelerated that the morning tranquillity that humankind has known throughout the ages had all but disappeared in our culture. Now you awake, as it were, in media race.

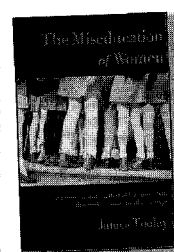
The morning format's latest development is to put the weathermen outside, among adoring crowds who throng the streets and the plazas outside the various networks' headquarters in Midtown

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“A brilliant and hopeful analysis of the complex relationship of Europe and Islam throughout the centuries. He postulates that contemporary economic integration and globalization strengthen the possibility that the two civilizations will eventually peacefully coexist.”—HUGH NISSENSON



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Manhattan, hoping to catch the camera's eye and enjoy a little apotheosis before lunch. Sometimes it seems as if the news only cares about an adoring glance from the people who watch it, and the people who watch it only care about the news when the news cares about them. People actually come at dawn and wait to shake hands on the air with Al Roker, or Tony Perkins, or Dave Price, the networks' happy-talking men-of-the-people weather guys. Roker and Perkins are black; and when you recall that during all the decades that the morning shows have been on there has been only one black anchor—Bryant Gumbel, who flamed out some years ago—it is sometimes unsettling to watch them play the buffoon before the crowds, in this weird metereological minstrelsy.

ON THE DEEPEST LEVEL, HOWEVER, the network morning shows—those on CNN and Fox are minor and relatively little-watched contributions to the genre—come as close as most popular culture does to replacing the spiritual devotions of yore. Media hipsters will roll their eyes at such an analogy, but the gulf between the mavens who write about these shows and the rest of the population who enjoy them is as wide as the chasm between black-and-white and digital television.

Consider the usual media response to the anchors themselves. Media observers remark upon the calculated largeness of personality, not to mention the obscene salaries—Couric reportedly earns \$14 million a year; they sniff celebrity narcissism and lavish derision. You get sneering patter about the on-air colonoscopy administered to Katie after her husband died of colon cancer; and Katie's hairstyle; and Katie's catfight with Ann Coulter; and Katie's hairstyle; and Diane's gaffe over this or that; and Diane's hairstyle; and Matt's hairstyle, and so on. You get reports on the morning shows' competition with each other—they sometimes use helicopters to drown out each other's live outdoor concerts; and you get scorecard reporting on which anchors are in and which are out, or about to be. And of course the endless business-page obsession with shows' revenues. None of which is totally irrelevant, of course, since these phenomenally successful programs are network television's biggest moneymakers.

But Katie Couric and Matt Lauer,

Oh

Oh my, Harold Brodkey, of all people, after all this time appearing to me, so long after his death, so even longer since our friendship, our last friendship, the third or fourth, the one anyway when the ties between us definitely frayed, (Oh, Harold's a handful, another of his ex-friends sympathized, to my relief);

Harold Brodkey, at a Christmas eve dinner, of all times and places, because of my nephew's broken nose, of all reasons, which he suffered in an assault, the bone shattered, reassembled, but healing a bit out of plumb, and when I saw him something Harold wrote came to mind, about Marlon Brando,

how until Brando's nose was broken he'd been pretty, but after he was beautiful, and that's the case here, a sensitive boy now a complicatedly handsome young man with a sinewy edge he hadn't had, which I surely remark because of Harold, and if I spoke to the dead, which I don't, or not often, I might thank him:

It's pleasant to think of you, Harold, of our good letters and talks; I'm sorry we didn't make it up that last time, I wanted to but I was worn out by your snits and rages, your mania to be unlike and greater than anyone else, your preemptive attacks for inadequate acknowledgment of your genius ...

But no, leave it alone, Harold's gone, truly gone, and isn't it unforgivable, vile, to stop loving someone, or to stop being loved; we don't mean to lose friends, but someone drifts off, and we let them, or they renounce us, or we them, or we're hurt, like flowers, for god's sake, when really we're prideful brutes, as blunt as icebergs.

Until something like this, some Harold Brodkey wandering into your mind, as exasperating as ever, and, oh my, as brilliant, as charming, unwound from his web to confront you with how ridden you are with unthought regret, how diminished, how well you know you'll clunk on to the next rationalization, the next loss, the next lie.

C. K. WILLIAMS

and Diane Sawyer and Charles Gibson, and Harry Smith and Julie Chen and the rest, have a job to do. They have to fill the role of extended family for the millions of people who watch them each morning; nothing less. And to become family, they have to construct an image of comfortable familiarity, and what makes the familiar comfortable is a reassuring imperfection, a demonstration of personal success without personal excellence. Katie, with her stiff, newly blonde hair; Matt, with his new close-shorn haircut that reveals his thinning hair; Diane, with the large mole on her knee, almost always visible through her stockings; bespectacled Harry, with his mild ineffectual old-fashioned banker's air and comfortably bald head (the very opposite of Vin Diesel bald)—the flaws and the touching soft spots in these anchors' self-presentation are a special idiom, conscious self-caricatures meant

to stick in the viewer's mind and to caress the viewer's ego.

Thus the shows are often studies in orchestrated humility and rigged self-effacement. Diane Sawyer is the master of the endearing awkwardness, sometimes forgetting which way to walk on the soundstage. (She always remembers when to forget.) There is even a kind of daily duel between her and her office-husband, Charles Gibson, over who is a more flawed and ordinary human being. After Labor Day weekend, Gibson teased Sawyer for taking two consecutive weeks of vacation rather than spreading her time off over several weeks. As she smiled tolerantly, also seemingly a little uncertain as to whether Gibson was right—that is, as she confidently performed her little crisis of confidence—Gibson strode to a chart and stuck decals on the days Sawyer had taken off, and the decals, with an on-cue

cuteness of their own, obligingly came loose and hung down on the board, causing Gibson to challenge Sawyer's uncertain smile with a sheepish smile. It was, like most morning television, a big smile-off. Sawyer frames her face with modesty the way cigarette smoke wreathed Garbo's face with glamour. Her smile disguises her condescension, but never merely. Only someone this ordinary could occupy a position so extraordinary, her face always says.

AND IT'S NOT JUST THE IMPERSONATION of humility that seals the bond with the viewer. As the morning shows have surpassed the evening news in audience numbers and revenue, the anchor position on the morning news shows has become the most sought-after job in broadcast television, which also makes the turnover rate in that slot far more volatile than that of the evening news shows. No morning anchorperson has the decades-long run that their counterparts enjoy in the evening. This high-stakes competitiveness is what provides what must be one of the most appealing features of the morning shows' self-humbling dimension: you can actually see these people trying as hard as they can to hold on to their jobs. They are on, up, buzzed, frantic with joie de vivre, pushing themselves to the very breaking point of brightness and patter.

Matt Lauer makes Sammy Glick look like Khalil Gibran. The new haircut, revealing the thinning hair, gives his anxious pushiness both justification and pathos. His facial expression is always one step ahead of his conversation. He is a man whose eyes have never been introduced to his tongue. If he is talking with someone who just lost a child, his expression indicates that he is thinking about his next guest, who just made a new movie. On one segment, an old buddy of his, a radio journalist who traveled around with the Beatles during their first American tour and had just written a book about his experiences with the Fab Four ("they were so approachable, so special"), congratulated Lauer at the end of the interview. Lauer looked like he was about to have a heart attack. "For what?" he asked, nearly hysterical. Indeed, what might that have meant? A spectacular on-air firing, perhaps? A sort of personnel/colonoscopy combo? Congratulations, tomorrow you leave your current job to cover the civil

war in Sudan, which experts believe will end sometime in 2075? But the unsuspecting interviewee had simply meant to congratulate Lauer on his anchor position, which apparently he had not had the chance to do until now.

I doubt that Lauer can perform such anxiety intentionally; he just has a natural gift for expressing—beneath the perennial smile—existential terror. And what could be better, more cathartic, than this open display of your deepest inner fears, whether you are a stay-at-home mom getting the kids ready for school and feeling consoled that you do not have to go out into the Darwinian den every day; or a man or woman drinking coffee or shaving or putting on makeup and feeling comforted and amused by this neutralizing spectacle of what could happen but should never happen and never will, not if you can help it. Matt is still there on *Today* tomorrow, after all, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow. *Today* really isn't another day. It is the same day, forever and ever.

Matt may not be deliberately performing his disquietude, but he is performing, as all the morning anchors perform. The show's producers and directors intend for you to see the performance, just as they intend for you to see the imperfection, and the signs of plastic surgery, and the tired faces of the anchors, who are up way before dawn every morning. The insincerity of the anchors is as transparent as Macy's display windows. Katie has a very special afterlook, which the camera never fails to catch: she smiles, she communes, she empathizes, and then, as soon as the interview or the report is over, she looks down and her expression grows inward and even slightly dark, as if she is in the grip of a powerful memory, or feeling the pull of a pressing obligation. This little morning-apprehensiveness-before-the-day-begins look is a kind of boon to the viewer's subconscious. The anti-smile element is a brilliant stroke, a subtle innovation, a manageable little subversion, in the morning smilefest.

On the subject of insincerity, Diane put it one morning with striking frankness. Watching a report about the cryogenic freezing of Ted Williams, she learned that Williams's body and head are stored in different containers. "Your face doesn't even know what expression to make when you're watching this story," she confessed. Yes, especially if

your chin is on one side of the room and your torso is on the other. Sawyer had finely articulated her and all the anchors' *modus operandi*. From segment to segment, from emotion to emotion, from news of war and destruction to news of finance, to weather, to interviews with grieving people, with grateful people, with important people, the anchors have to know what face to fit to what story.

But most of all they have to show the viewer that they are struggling to fit the face to the story. Gide said that you cannot appear sincere and be sincere at the same time, and the anchors and their bosses capitalize on this impasse. Who, anyway, is ready for candor from a stranger first thing in the morning? That comes soon enough: if you don't know the score by three o'clock that afternoon, you are in trouble. By the end of the day, you are ready for Letterman and Leno and beyond. America wakes to insincerity and goes to sleep to irony and cynicism.

AND SO IN THESE MORNING times before the complicated day begins, as the mind is just beginning to grasp what lies ahead and what still lies behind, we are finally meant to notice that the anchors are feigning pity or compassion or happiness or reverence. We are meant to see the mental intention struggling to complete itself as an authentic feeling. We are meant to see that they are working at something, which isn't easy; that they are trying to satisfy the expectations of their bosses and of their audience, which isn't easy; that they are trying to conform their inner states to the social situation, which isn't easy—in other words, they are trying, so transparently, so deliberately, to do what most of us have to do every day.

This playacting is for our cathartic benefit. It gets interwoven through deftly chosen and balanced stories about death, and about survivors, who often thank God for preserving them and for keeping them sane through the destruction of others. Those are the crosses that have to be borne, and the perils from the night before (a lot of these things happened while we were sleeping). Then there are the contradictions: drugs that might or might not work; politicians who might or might not have failed the public trust; parents who refuse to condemn their overweight hacker son, who has nearly brought down

an entire industry, and who may or may not be guilty, but still deserves his parents' love. And then, too, are the redemptions. Just about every morning show has, at one point or another, a story about newborn babies or young children, and each day's show often includes at least a reference to weddings.

In this subtle and wholly uncalculated way, the shows portray life's dangers,

conundrums, confusions. They enumerate life's blessings. And like all morning prayers, which end with a direct appeal for protection to the divinity, the morning shows finish with our own version of perfect happiness: since Possibility is the American god, they conclude with an interview with a celebrity. Harmless and comforting and diverting inanity without end. Amen selah. ■

Terry Castle The Ick Factor

**NOTHING THAT MEETS THE EYE:
THE UNCOLLECTED STORIES
OF PATRICIA HIGHSMITH**
By Patricia Highsmith
(W.W. Norton, 456 pp., \$15.95)

**BEAUTIFUL SHADOW:
A LIFE OF PATRICIA HIGHSMITH**
By Andrew Wilson
(Bloomsbury, 534 pp., \$32.50)

**HIGHSMITH:
A ROMANCE OF THE 1950S**
By Marijane Meaker
(Cleis Press, 207 pp., \$14.95)

YOU PATRICIA HIGHSMITH fans, you know who you are. Your ugly white trash mother tried to abort you in 1921 by drinking turpentine, so you are not very fond of her. You first met your father in Texas when you were twelve and he immediately put his hands down your pants. You keep snails—hundreds of them—in your house in Switzerland. They make good pets and will survive us all. Cats are nice, too. When friends come over, you like to swing the little boy kitty around in a towel so he gets groggy and sick and staggers when you put him down again. You favor white Oxford-cloth shirts and jeans and black loafers. You wear a pinky ring. When you go to the ladies' room in a restaurant, the old biddies in there all squawk and say you're in the wrong bathroom. You have slept with a million women, and like to have a few beers and old-fashioned before it's even breakfast time.

If you had been a man you would

probably have been called Dicky or Nicky or Freddie or Cliffie—some stupid faggot name like that. Or maybe Tom. *Tom Ripley!* You've got death on the brain. You are interested in growths and tumors and medical waste. Serial killers bore you, though: too predictable, too sentimental. You prefer it when somebody ordinary goes right off the deep end. Starts bludgeoning their nearest and dearest. Bludgeoning is your favorite kind of murder, in fact: hard to get more direct than that. You know what it takes to brain a child: a single sharp blow if the kid is under eight, maybe two if it's older. You've never had any kids yourself, obviously, and that is probably a good thing. Your own goddaughter describes you as "a weird, unkind, and dissolute person." One of your American publishers says you are the "most odious woman he's ever met." Even your oldest friend thinks you are "hormonally strange." How's that for the milk of human kindness!

It's true: you are a great hater and you do not mind saying so. You hate women, Jews, blacks, and Catholics. I mean really hate. Women shouldn't be allowed in libraries when they are menstruating, you say. Black men have to have sex several times a day or they get sick. The "yids" are to blame for the decline in the quality of airline food: no good sandwiches to be had anymore in first class. If only American bombers would hit the Vatican. People who claim to be happy are "retarded." People in nursing homes? Unplug 'em, you say. There is no such thing as love in the world. You're going to croak soon too from cancer and smoking and nose-

bleeds and you don't want to be kept alive on a tube, like a big senile baby in your adult diapers.

TOO HARSH A PORTRAIT, YOU say? Not a nice way to start a review? The hell with you. The canonization of Patricia Highsmith—doyenne of the psychological suspense novel, depressive homosexual, mean drunk, and one of the greatest, darkest American storytellers since Poe—has officially begun. W.W. Norton is in the process of re-issuing all of Highsmith's major fiction—from the classic early thrillers *Strangers on a Train* (1950), *The Blunderer* (1954), and *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1955) to such morbid later masterpieces as *A Dog's Ransom* (1972), *Little Tales of Misogyny* (1977), *The Animal Lover's Book of Beastly Murder* (1975), *The Boy Who Followed Ripley* (1980), *People Who Knock on the Door* (1983), and *Tales of Natural and Unnatural Catastrophes* (1989). Her long-suppressed lesbian novel *The Price of Salt*, originally published under the pseudonym Claire Morgan in 1952, has been back in print for a while; and now the first biography is here, too, along with a tell-all memoir by one of the many women with whom Highsmith slept in the 1950s and 1960s. The problem is, to really cozy up to Highsmith you almost need some kind of decontamination suit, like those big vinyl overalls worn by people who bury toxic sludge. The life of a jaded, butch, Scotch-soaked lady novelist? Not a pretty sight.

Gifted writers and artists are seldom the cheeriest of souls—let alone people you'd really want to live with. Still, to judge by the joyless, even harrowing portrait of her in *Beautiful Shadow*, Andrew Wilson's new biography, Highsmith must have been—to put it mildly—as weird as snakes. This was a woman who once smuggled her cherished pet snails through French customs by hiding six or eight of them under each bosom. Her idea of a stylish coffee-table book was *A Color Atlas of Forensic Pathology* ("a veritable gore-fest of ... color photographs of 'car accidents, murders and rape cases: the really shocking images

Terry Castle teaches English at Stanford University. Her new book, THE LITERATURE OF LESBIANISM: A HISTORICAL ANTHOLOGY FROM ARIOSTO TO STONEWALL, has just been published by Columbia University Press.

that don't reach the public.'"). She dreamed in turn of creating a fictional character "obsessed with the detritus of modern living—waste material, including abortions, the contents of toilets, bedpans, diapers, hysterectomies." ("I need a character obsessed with all this," she said. "I've got one myself.") Creepy ideas came to her, she once said, as "frequently as rats had orgasms."

In one of the less agreeable stories in *Tales of Natural and Unnatural Catastrophes*, called "The Mysterious Cemetery," Highsmith describes the strange fungus-like growths emerging from the soil above the graves of cancer victims who have been buried in a provincial Austrian hospital cemetery after receiving experimental radiation treatments:

bulbous figurines of bluish-green and off-white color, which eerily rose above the surface of the soil and grew, some, to a height of two meters or so. Others of these mushroom-like growths attained only fifty centimeters, some were even smaller, and all were bizarre, like nothing else in nature, even coral.

Spotting the unusual growths one night, Highsmith's protagonist, a young medical student named Oktavian, realizes at once that they have something to do with the experiments of his hospital supervisors:

He supposed, he was almost sure, that the growths out there in the darkness were highly contaminous. They would combine the carcinogens injected by the doctors as well as the original berserk cells that had caused the cancer. How large would they become? And what was nourishing them? Terrifying questions! Oktavian, like most medical students, sent chums an odd part of the human anatomy once in a while. It was almost a token of affection when a fellow received such a present in the post from a girl student, but something like this? No.

After the elderly graveyard caretaker dies of "metastatic tumors," hospital ad-

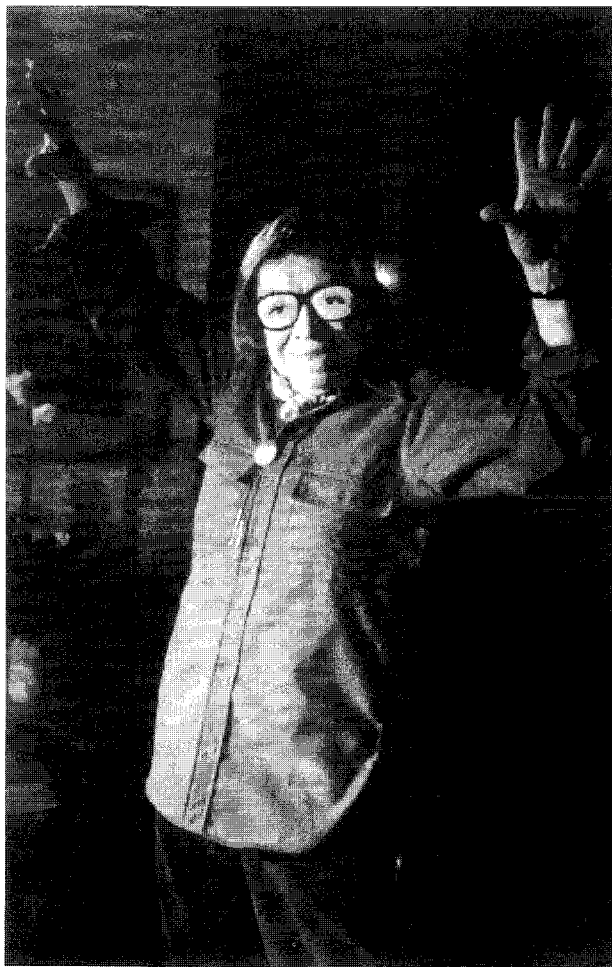
ministrators disinfect the soil and try to incinerate the fungi, but they keep growing back—each one a "pale curve," rounded at the top "with what looked like a convolution or crease half way down it that disappeared in the earth." (Oktavian's girlfriend finds one that looks like a fetus, "at that stage when fish and mammal show their rudimentary gills under the head-to-be.") Government officials cordon off the cemetery with a heavy wire fence and danger-of-

friend can't decide one way or another, and instead "[think] about marrying."

One might take such a fantasy—as many reviewers did when the story was first published in 1987—as a sign of Highsmith's dismay, late in life, at the prospect of planetary ecological disaster. But one senses here, and not just in this story, a rather more intimate (and perhaps less consoling) negativity at work. For Highsmith, life itself was cancerous—malevolent, disgusting, and (without the

requisite bottle of Dewar's at hand) intolerably alienating. Human beings were foul and stupid, their bodies nothing more than tumors waiting to happen. On they went, fucking and spreading and rotting, like out-of-control cells in a necrotizing sarcoma. Highsmith's sense of the vileness of things—of things gone wrong at a primal, even physiochemical level—was as deep and prurient as Swift's. She was "one of the great misanthropists," said a friend after her death. "I could imagine her committing unspeakable crimes if she had no outlet, the outlet of her writing."

The feelings of disgust and dread—or so her biographer suggests—seem to have arisen early. Highsmith was an only child, born in Fort Worth, in frankly unpromising circumstances. Her mother, Mary Coates, was a beautiful woman—a "double," in Highsmith's view, for Greta Garbo—but vain, cold, critical, and in her later years often violently unstable. When Mary became pregnant, Highsmith's father, Jay Plangman, a seedy and somewhat feckless commercial



PATRICIA HIGHSMITH

death signs, but the place soon becomes a perverse site of pilgrimage—a "tourist attraction" for thrill-seekers, journalists, and avant-garde artists (who make abstract sculptures inspired by the growths). "Some philosophers and poets compared the grotesque shapes to a man-made wreckage of his own soul, to an insane tinkering with nature, such as that which had resulted in the accursed atomic bomb. Other philosophers countered: 'Is cancer not natural to man?'" At story's end, Oktavian and his girl-

artist of German ancestry, urged her to abort the unborn child by drinking turpentine. The ploy was unsuccessful and Plangman abandoned wife and baby soon after Patricia was born. (Highsmith's mother was later wont to marvel—in fits of senile drollery—about her daughter's supposed fondness for the smell of turpentine.) Highsmith did not meet her biological father until she was in her early teens; and soon after she did, she claimed, he got out his pornography collection and promptly tried to

seduce her. It is hard not to see in him, at however odd a remove, something of her celebrated fictional creation—the sadistic, impervious, sexually inscrutable con man Tom Ripley.

After her mother got married again—to a dim-witted fellow named Stanley Highsmith—“Patsy,” who loathed him, was given her new stepfather’s surname. The family finances were precarious; Mary and Stanley fought constantly; Highsmith was often parked with a grandmother. Perhaps unsurprisingly, she grew up, as she later recalled, “an alert, anxious-faced child over whom hangs already the grey-black spirit of doom, of foreordained unhappiness, the knowledge of which made this child weep often.” She was plagued by night frights and illnesses and odd hallucinations (including one of a phantom rodent that darted constantly into her field of vision for several years) and consoled herself with gruesome picture books about World War I. One of her earliest childhood memories was of watching two “sex-mad” flies copulating in the air above the family dinner table. She was convinced that they did so mainly to embarrass her grandmother, who had invited a local preacher for supper.

IN ADOLESCENCE HIGHSMITH retreated ever deeper into her morbid private world. She followed the Lindbergh baby case with furtive interest, fantasized about murdering her stepfather, and read obsessively in Dr. Karl Menninger’s *The Human Mind Revisited* (1930), a lurid compendium of psychological case histories dealing with kleptomania, pyromania, infanticide, paranoia, and the erotic perversions. Menninger’s gallery of deviant “types,” writes Wilson, “appealed to her already instinctive belief that behind an individual’s respectable façade lay a mass of contradictions and perverse desires; a psychological dynamic that was ripe for creative exploration.” “I can’t think of anything more apt to set the imagination stirring, drifting, creating,” she said later, “than the idea—the fact—that anyone you walk past on the pavement anywhere may be a sadist, a compulsive thief, or even a murderer.” The atmosphere of sickly apprehension so palpable in Highsmith’s suspense fiction—her ability to induce in the reader states of extraordinary mental disquiet using the most banal-seeming material—is surely due to this: a precociously Gothic sense

of human psychology. The capacity for evil lay in everyone, she felt: all it took was a small derangement of ordinary circumstances—a tiny, inimical tweak in the fabric of reality—for the monster to emerge.

Highsmith’s obsession with her mother—a bond at once sterile, consuming, and disturbingly eroticized—was instrumental in shaping this bleak view. “I am married to my mother,” she wrote in an early poem; “I shall never wed another.” Mary Highsmith was somehow the worst of both worlds: demanding, seductive, but catastrophically unloving. For seven decades (she lived into her nineties) she ruled over her daughter’s psychic life like an unasked-for bride—a malign, indestructible Miss Havisham of the soul. “All my life work,” Highsmith noted in a diary in the early 1940s, “will be an undedicated monument to a woman.” Though Highsmith exiled herself to Europe after 1963—she was always more esteemed there as a writer than in the United States—she never managed to escape the grim and obdurate queen enthroned in her own heart.

WHICH IS NOT TO SAY THAT she was a uxorious, or even a faithful, consort. One of the most depressing aspects of Wilson’s biography is the ponderous accounting of the adult Highsmith’s numerous botched love affairs—each one more dysphoric and doom-laden than the last. Highsmith’s sexual promiscuity began early. Her mother and stepfather moved to New York in the 1930s, and Highsmith had her first lesbian affairs while still a student at Julia Richman High School in Manhattan. (An early flame was Judy Tuvim, later to win an Oscar for *Born Yesterday* under the name Judy Holliday.) At Barnard in the early 1940s, in full bohemian revolt against her mother’s jealous censoriousness, Highsmith frequented the women’s bars of Greenwich Village and left what one witness described as “a trail of unmade beds” behind her. Around this time she also became infatuated with Rosalind Constable, a literary agent and the lover of the New York gallery owner Betty Parsons. Constable, who admired the stories Highsmith had begun publishing in the *Barnard Quarterly*, subsequently sponsored Highsmith’s application to Yaddo, where she would complete her first major crime thriller, *Strangers on a Train*, in 1948.

Like other prominent lesbian writers of her time (Bowles, Yourcenar, Bishop, Sarton, Sackville-West), Highsmith seems to have been both a boyish, flirty, compulsive seductress—a sort of sapphic Dennis the Menace—and pitifully incompetent at finding lasting joy or ease with any of her partners. Granted, she was never exclusively gay in the technical sense: while in her twenties she had several experimental flings with men, including one with the homosexual photographer Rolf Tietgens, who took the extraordinary nude photo of her from 1942 that is reproduced in Wilson’s book. To those who know Highsmith only from her cheerless dust jackets of the 1980s and 1990s—in which she typically manages to look both petrified and pickled, like an alcoholic basilisk—Tietgens’s portrait shows just how dizzyingly attractive she was as a young woman. Lean, louche, androgynous, with jet black hair, a foppish forelock, and full, pouting lips: a real Texas Cherubino. (Tietgens confessed at the time that he was drawn to her because “you are a boy, you know.”) Her somewhat weird erotic allure, intriguing to both sexes, would never be diminished, even as her features underwent the Dorian Gray-style dilapidation of later years.

Still, Highsmith thought of herself as mainly queer, and after a brief attempt at “curing” her homosexuality through psychoanalysis in the late 1940s she returned with libertine gusto to her female amours and infatuations. Wilson itemizes each one in scholarly fashion: a half-century’s worth of Annes, Virginias, Kathleens, Kathryns, Elizabeths, Madeleines, Marions, Marys, Lynns, and Ellens; but it’s fairly difficult to keep them all straight. (Or even gay: Highsmith was often painfully attracted to tall, blonde, unavailable straight women.) Highsmith tried living with a few of them, with predictably disastrous results. In her fascinating account of her cocktail-fueled affair with Highsmith in the late 1950s, Marijane Meaker describes the writer repeatedly menacing her with a switchblade when they rented a house together in Bucks County in 1959–1960. When Meaker met her former lover again in 1988—twenty-seven years after they had last seen each other—Highsmith railed against Jews and blacks and mortified Meaker and her friends with her gaucheries and drunken outbursts. “I have a definite psychosis in being with people,” the novelist once observed.

No one seems ever to have succeeded in breaking through Highsmith's rigid self-armoring—except, possibly, toward the end of her life. Her last significant love affair, begun when she was fifty-seven, was with Tabea Blumenschein, a twentysomething German artist and film-maker, whom Highsmith met at the Berlin Film Festival in the mid-1970s. (Though not always happy with the film adaptations of her fiction—she disliked Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train* [1951] and loathed most of the film and television versions of the Ripley novels—Highsmith took more than a passing interest in cinema.) Blumenschein had spiky punk-rocker hair and a penchant for the less salubrious forms of Berlin night life, and she enjoyed dressing up in gay male leather drag. She took Highsmith, a Mozart lover, to grungy lesbian discos and gave her the Rolling Stones' *Sticky Fingers* and Lou Reed's *Transformer*. Highsmith became farcically besotted, to the point of preserving as a fetish a dirty bath mat stolen from a hotel in which they had made love. When Blumenschein abruptly dumped her—she wrote Highsmith a chilling note saying it was a shame, but her relationships never lasted longer than four weeks—the aging novelist was devastated. Highsmith worked some of the details of the affair into *The Boy Who Followed Ripley*, the book she was writing at the time, but she was unable to exorcise the memory of Blumenschein, even years later. The whole pathetic business was like a lesbian version of *The Blue Angel*, with Blumenschein in the amoral showgirl part and Highsmith as the clownish, infatuated professor who destroys himself over her.

There is no denying that Highsmith's private life was a fiasco—squalid, chaotic, often extraordinarily painful. As Wilson quietly demonstrates—and he is non-judgmental to a fault—she had excruciating difficulties engaging with other people. Virtually everyone who met her remembers her lifelong diffidence: her pathological fear of shaking hands, the way she would reflexively take several steps backward when introduced to someone, the hostile and ruinous drinking. Some readers will disparage Wilson's revelations as sordid and unwelcome, like photographs of a car wreck, but to do so is also to miss the point. Quite as much as T. E. Lawrence, Highsmith was a Prince of our Disorder (though she was far more mannish than he). Anyone who

has grown up troubled or shy or gay will instantly identify with certain parts of her story—the towering rage above all. However cruelly and ignobly she vented it, her animus toward the world was a psychic necessity, a survival mechanism. In contemplating Highsmith's life and work, Terence's attitude is the right one: *Humani nil a me alienum puto*.

BUT THE FIASCO OF THE LIFE IS also the key to the work. Highsmith's personality disorder is everywhere on display in her novels—most strikingly in her plots, which like those of her masters Dostoevsky and Camus (or of J. M. Coetzee) turn upon the unbridgeable alienation of one person from another. Susannah Clapp once described Highsmith as “a balladeer of stalking.” “The fixation of one person on another,” Clapp observed, “oscillating between attraction and antagonism, figures in almost every Highsmith tale.” This seems sadly apt. The stalker wants to get as close as possible to someone: close enough to see, hear, touch, taste, breathe (or murder) the other person, but without any real intimacy being established. Stalking is a parody of intimacy: a way of being in proximity without the pain—or the ecstasy—of actual attachment. (Not that the stalker sees it that way: typically, he or she blames the victim for somehow resisting intimacy, thus authorizing the stalker's endlessly renewed predations.) Like Satan locked in the ice at the end of Dante's *Inferno*, Highsmith seems to have felt herself eternally condemned to such a parody of closeness. Even in the act of sex, she wrote, she felt somehow set apart—forced to watch herself and her partner “as though we were on stage.”

In the plethora of stalker-victim pairings in Highsmith's fiction, it is hard not to see a compulsive reiteration of the problem. Go-Away-a-Little-Closer is the name of the dreaded Highsmith game: cozy up to someone in one of her novels and you might as well be dead. Wilde had it right—and Highsmith respected him profoundly—about every man killing the thing that he loves. Except in Highsmith's blighted world you only think that you love the “thing” (or person) in question. The cold-hearted bugger or bitch—or so you realize after a while—has been duping you from the start. They deserve to die.

The final nasty twist, of course, is that

even being a top-notch stalker does not always afford protection: someone else may be stalking *you*. Stalkers and victims exchange roles in Highsmith's novels with dizzying frequency. No one is exempt from the collective autism. There are seldom children in Highsmith's fictional universe: so much obvious naïveté would be heartbreaking. But her adults are often childish in their vulnerability—dim, chaotic, morally flaccid beings, unerringly drawn to those who wish them ill.

Thus, in *Strangers on a Train*, Guy, an architect caught in a messy divorce, meets another man on a train, the sinister Bruno, who makes a deal with him: Bruno will murder Guy's troublesome wife if Guy will murder Bruno's wealthy father. They will both elude punishment, says Bruno, because even if they are caught, the police will not be able to discover a motive for either crime. The reader is instantly and sickeningly drawn in—first as Bruno stalks Guy's hapless wife and kills her (“a sense of purpose, strange and sweet to him, carried him along in an irresistible current”), then as he begins to stalk Guy himself, who is now stricken with guilt and wants to renege on the deal. Terrorized by Bruno's blackmail, Guy, in turn, commits the second agreed-upon murder—only to disintegrate, Raskolnikov-like, in suicidal panic as the whole deranging scam starts to close in on him. The fact that he is obscurely attracted to Bruno, whose bland blond looks, smooth “waxen” skin, and blue-tinged eye sockets give him a queasy, catamitic, Warholish glamour, adds a final element of unwholesomeness to what is already an astonishingly repellent tale.

In the superb *Cry of the Owl* (1962), Robert Forester, an erstwhile peeping Tom, discovers with a shock that the young woman he is calmly observing one night from behind a clump of bushes outside her house is actually staring back at him. (This has to be one of the eeriest moments in all of Highsmith's eerie fiction.) She invites him in, engages him in ditsy conversation, and, to his consternation, becomes emotionally obsessed with him. In his own dreamy maladapted way, Forester tries to reciprocate, but when he confesses a few weeks later that it just isn't working, she commits suicide. For the rest of the novel he is pursued—nightmarishly—by her goon boyfriend, who blames him for her death and wants to kill him. By the end of it all, the unlucky voyeur is a schizoid wreck, and

Highsmith has made us identify with him entirely.

In *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, Highsmith's perverse re-working of James's *The Ambassadors*, the stalker is of course Tom Ripley (yet another peeping Tom), who is dispatched to Europe to bring home the scapegrace son of a wealthy American businessman. When Tom finds the errant Dickie loafing around in a fishing village on the Riviera with his girlfriend, he insinuates himself into their ménage and develops a weird crush on his prey, even as Dickie, a born cocktease, vamps girlishly in return. Erotic feeling, dangerously mixed with resentment, would seem to prompt that frenzied scene of lust and loathing—one of Highsmith's bloodiest—in which Tom ends up battering Dickie to death with an oar while they are out at sea one day in a skiff. (Some Highsmith aficionados thought Matt Damon, the Ripley in Anthony Minghella's film version of the book, too young and puerile for the part; but I found his horn-rimmed glasses, prudish affect, and hairless, pale, mole-flecked torso oddly right.) At the end of the novel, having deceived or killed anyone who might connect him with the crime, Ripley brazenly assumes Dickie's identity, and also his fortune.

Yet even such psychopathic triumph is conditional. In later Ripley novels—Highsmith would produce three sequels—Ripley is himself menaced by various nutcases. Highsmith always claimed to be "in love" with Ripley and would even sometimes autograph books and photographs using his name. But she had no compunction about showing him as the stalkee, as in the grisly, gay-themed *The Boy Who Followed Ripley*. Given the sheer malignancy of existence, not even a ghoul or a robot is invulnerable. One can't help but feel that had Highsmith lived longer she would have killed Ripley off at some point, and rather more sadistically than Conan Doyle dispatched Holmes.

EVEN, FINALLY, IN THE LESBIAN romance *The Price of Salt*—the one Highsmith novel, paradoxically, that might be said to have a happy ending—the same alienated sensibility is at work. I confess to having doted on this book in my twenties (I must have read it seven or eight times); and even now the euphoric central love affair—between Therese, a shy young theater designer working as a temporary

salesgirl in a Manhattan department store, and Carol, the sardonic (and gorgeous) older woman who comes into the toy department one day to buy a doll—can set sluggardly sapphic pulses a-racing. (In the movie version of the novel that runs in my head, the *soignée* Carol is played by Charlotte Rampling.) The book was a gay best-seller when Highsmith published it under the pseudonym Claire Morgan in 1952; and thirty years later—after much paranoid grousing that her reputation would be hurt if she acknowledged it—she allowed a feminist press to re-issue it under her own name.

For five decades the book was an underground lesbian classic—and not only because the women lovers survive the novel without splitting up, committing suicide, or one of them running off with a man. (Carol instead manages to divorce her brutish husband and retain custody of her daughter, even though he threatens to expose her as a sexual deviant.) Despite Highsmith's adherence to the corny conventions of classic pulp fiction, the book is also surprisingly hot. The scene in which Carol and Therese first make love in a small highway motel in the Midwest—they are driving frantically across country in an attempt to elude a detective the husband has put on their trail—has a dated, delicious, 1950s-style steaminess, redolent of jukeboxes, Betty Page pinups, cumbrous blue Oldsmobiles, and endless long-necked bottles of Ne-Hi soda. No Lesbian Bed Death for these gals.

But the backstory is not quite so enchanting. The book is partly autobiographical: while working, like Therese, as a temporary clerk in Bloomingdale's in 1948, Highsmith too fell in love at first sight with an elegant female customer. ("I see her the same instant she sees me, and instantly, I love her," she later recalled.) In the novel Therese finds the woman's name and address on a sales slip and cleverly engineers a second meeting. Highsmith was hardly so straightforward. After learning her prey's married name—Mrs. E.R. Senn—Highsmith took a train out to the suburban New Jersey town where she lived with her husband and children and staked out their house for most of a day, feeling all the while "quite odd—like a murderer in a novel."

Highsmith repeated this solitary love-trek on several occasions and fantasized in her diary about "placing her hands on the woman's throat, and squeezing until

she was still and cold as a statue." But she never saw Senn again or learned her first name (it was Kathleen). All the unfulfilled fantasies had to be channeled, if somewhat cryptically, into the character of Carol. Bizarrely—as Wilson has discovered—Kathleen Senn's real-life fate turned out to be bleakly Highsmithian: after a series of nervous breakdowns, she gassed herself in the family garage in 1951, only a few months before the novel she had unwittingly inspired appeared in print.

Re-reading *The Price of Salt* with the Senn story in mind, it is hard not to fixate on the book's darker, even unwholesome, elements. It's not only that the love story itself at times seems unwholesome—though female homosexuality is always a tough sell, in literature as in life. Even now, it is extremely difficult for writers to present lesbian desire in an unabashedly positive light: Proust could not do it, nor could Woolf or Henry James. At some fairly deep psychic level—an archetypal one?—lesbianism still seems, alas, reflexively bound up with the themes of loneliness, sterility, unnaturalness, and genetic abnormality. Highsmith's lovers are far more attractive and appealing than those, say, in Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, but that doesn't rule out a subliminal ick factor that may be intrinsic to the subject.

Highsmith seems to have been well aware of the difficulty. She even takes perverse advantage of it. When Carol gives Therese a supposedly comforting glass of hot milk early in their relationship, the imagery is disquieting: "the milk seemed to taste of bone and blood, of warm flesh, or hair, saltless as chalk yet alive as a growing embryo." Elsewhere she hints broadly at the quasi-incestuous nature of the women's liaison. At such moments you don't have to be straight (and hung up) to feel slightly nauseated.

Yet most tellingly, perhaps, the stalking motif also re-appears, and in a portentous literary form. I have long had a theory that Nabokov knew *The Price of Salt* and modeled the climactic cross-country car chase in *Lolita* on Therese and Carol's frenzied bid for freedom in the earlier novel. Humbert's panic-stricken flight through the Midwest with his adored "Lo," the crazy-sinister detective Quilty in hot pursuit, is one of the great emblematic sequences in modern American literature, combining mania, danger, and paranoia (and tacky highway scenery) with rhapsodic taboo ro-

mance. Yet the whole disturbing combination is quintessentially Highsmithian. Highsmith was the first writer to mix roadside Americana, transgressive sex, and the impinging threat of a morals charge—and she went about it as masterfully as anyone.

SO WHERE TO BEGIN IF YOU DON'T know her? One could do worse than start with *Nothing That Meets the Eye*, a volume of uncollected stories written between 1938 and 1982. (The book is a companion volume to *The Selected Stories*, which appeared two years ago.) The earliest stories date from Highsmith's Barnard years, and one wonders what her poodle-skirted classmates made of them. "The Mightiest Mornings," written when Highsmith was only nineteen, is a startlingly accomplished and profoundly unsavory vignette about a man, newly arrived in a small Vermont town, who is suspected (correctly?) of pedophilia when he befriends a fey little girl named Freya. His life—and his joy in life—are obliterated in a matter of pages.

Subsequent tales turn on murderous loathing between sisters ("Where the Door Is Always Open and the Welcome Mat Is Out" and "Quiet Night"), adultery and voyeurism ("The Still Point of the Turning World"), Mexican sex tourism ("In the Plaza"), hysterical paralysis ("The Piano of the Steinachs"), and psychotic postal workers ("Music to Die By"). (The last-named was written in 1963: Highsmith was nothing if not prescient.) The writing is quite staggeringly good. In "Uncertain Treasure," the main character is a half-mad cripple who finds a lost bag in the subway: "One ear bent under the black-and-white checked cap, but where the other ear should have been was a daub of white flesh like the opening of a balloon which is tied with string." In the grotesque little masterpiece titled "Two Disagreeable Pigeons," Highsmith tells the story, absurdly, from the point of view of a resentful female pigeon, but somehow extracts from it an unforgettable *Notes From Underground*-like pathos and unease.

It is aggravating to think how little official appreciation Highsmith gets, even now, from serious critics and literary scholars. Her self-imposed European exile, her shockingly intransigent personality, and her lifelong preference for the lowly crime genre have undoubtedly had something to do with her unenthusiastic

reception in the United States. (Despite the recent re-issues and the Minghella film, many of her most brilliant novels from the 1960s and 1970s remain unavailable in this country.) Yet even while she puts a decorous crowd-pleaser like Eudora Welty—so much more presentable, so much more ladylike—completely in the shade, I doubt that the Library of America will catch up with her anytime soon. She is far too nasty and strange.

"Patricia Highsmith was a tough-minded writer who believed man capable

of extraordinary evil," writes the German critic Paul Ingendaay in his superb afterword to *Nothing That Meets the Eye*, "and she took a dim view of man's capacity for self-knowledge and self-improvement." Andrew Wilson's biography confirms it: life was a blight, as far as Highsmith was concerned—a "beautiful shadow" concealing rot, madness, and decay. Unpatriotic attitudes, to be sure—the expression of a damaged and death-driven soul; but also those of an authentic American master. Oh, and remember to hide the cat when she comes over. ■

Alan Taylor Crucibles

IN THE DEVIL'S SNARE:
THE SALEM WITCHCRAFT CRISIS
OF 1692

By Mary Beth Norton
(Alfred A. Knopf, 436 pp., \$30)

THE PURITANS OF COLONIAL New England puzzle or appall us for having believed in witchcraft unto the death of its suspects. Their witch-hunting infests our popular memory as an original, national sin: as something we can congratulate ourselves for outgrowing or as a cautionary reminder of our lingering potential for collective folly and cruelty. We would like to consider ourselves more rational and scientific than they, but can we be so sure? Indeed, we cannot shake the anxiety, as Arthur Miller insisted in *The Crucible*, that we conduct latter-day witch hunts against imagined traitors within. So we never think about Puritan witch-hunting without making it about ourselves in the present.

With mixed results, historians try to transcend such "presentism" by scrupulously reconstructing the cultural context of the past so as to treat the Puritans on their own terms rather than as inferior or interior versions of ourselves. In their time, a belief in witches followed logically from seventeenth-century conditions and assumptions that were pervasive in Europe as well as in the colonies. Early modern people did not dwell in the disenchanted universe of pure reason

(nor, of course, do most contemporary Americans—witness the popular credulity for the existence of angels, ghosts, space aliens, and compassionate conservatives). The Puritans saw and heard wondrous signs of God's purpose and the devil's menace: ominous lights in the sky, prophetic dreams, multiple suns, eclipses, comets, deformed births, speaking infants, poltergeists, unseen and portentous voices, eerie coincidences, apparitions of warring armies or ships in the sky, and cases of blasphemers and Sabbath-breakers suddenly struck dead. Given God's omnipotence and Satan's malignity, all such "remarkable providences" seemed pregnant with a divine meaning that the Puritans struggled to decipher as a guide to communal security.

The colonists shared the seventeenth-century European conviction that Satan recruited humans to become his servants—his witches—by signing their names in blood in his book. Selling their souls, witches obtained magical power to harm and to kill their enemies on earth. When cattle and children sickened and died, the New England colonists suspected witchcraft by some in their midst. To protect the community, the Puritan magistrates had to identify, to prosecute, and to execute witches—by hanging rather than the burning of popular myth.

Witchcraft made perfect sense to a pre-modern people vulnerable to an unpredictable and often deadly natural world beyond their control: fires, floods,

windstorms, droughts, crop blights, livestock diseases, and human epidemics. Unpredictable and deadly afflictions demanded explanation, some attribution of cause, that might protect people from further suffering, or at least console them with resignation to God's will. No Puritans wished to believe that misfortune lacked a supernatural meaning, for random accident would confirm their helplessness and their isolation in a world without God. Witchcraft was also plausible because some colonists did dabble in the occult to tell fortunes and to cure, or to inflict, ills—though there is little reason to believe that such “cunning folk” worshipped Satan or that they possessed more than the ominous power of suggestion.

The victims of affliction usually blamed aggressive and contentious individuals—particularly poorer folk and older women who acted with an assertion deemed beyond their assigned social station. Females constituted the majority of both the accusers (mostly young) and the accused (mostly older). While attesting that the words of women had power in Puritan communities, their disproportionate prosecution also demonstrated the considerable unease generated by that power—and pointed to a generational tension between young and old.

Although the belief in witchcraft was pervasive and continuous, the prosecution of witches was sporadic and localized, occasionally erupting in a few especially fractious towns, where long memories nurtured grudges and suspicions. Rather than rush to judgment, the authorities usually contained suspicions short of trials by scrupulously following legal procedures in gathering evidence and examining witnesses. Even when a case proceeded to trial, it was no easy matter to prove witchcraft. The New England colonists prosecuted ninety-three witches but executed only sixteen—until 1692, when a peculiar mania at Salem dramatically inflated the numbers.

Salem was an especially troubled township, internally divided into two parishes with distinct communities and churches: the commercial seaport of Salem Town and the farming hinterland of Salem Village (now Danvers). The latter was particularly rancorous, squabbling over farmland and a succession of ministers with short tempers and tenures. That January in Salem Village, two teenage girls in the household of Reverend Samuel Parris began to suf-

fer fits and hallucinations. Encouraged by local adults, principally the confrontational Parris, the girls accused a growing number, and an expanding orbit, of witches. Taken with deadly seriousness by the county magistrates, the accusations ultimately led to formal charges against 144 people (thirty-eight men and 106 women) from twenty-two different towns. The prosecutors secured fifty-four confessions, which provided the critical evidence to convict and execute twenty people (fourteen women and six men). No previous episode could compare in scale or intensity. Ending in early 1693, the spree left such bitter feelings and guilty consciences that New Englanders abandoned judicial witch-hunting.

EVERY NEW HISTORY OF SALEM witch-hunting offers a particular theory that resonates with contemporary American concerns. In 1975, Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum published the provocative and influential *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft*. Troubled by American materialism, they found a tension between the peasant values of Salem Village and the nascent capitalism of Salem Town. A year later, popular interest in psychotropic drugs influenced Linda R. Caporael's argument, published in *Science* magazine, that ergot poisoning caused the hallucinations and the paranoia of Salem in 1692 (a shaky interpretation much recycled in print and on television). In 1987, feminism informed Carol F. Karlsen's *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England*, which more clearly discerned Puritan misogyny in the selective and disproportionate prosecution of assertive women. And now Mary Beth Norton reflects historians' current drive to recover the importance of Indians, and especially the violence by and against them, in the making of American culture and society.

Norton is an especially productive and influential scholar, specializing in the history of women in colonial and revolutionary America. As a feminist, Norton initially felt drawn to the Salem story because it pivoted around female protagonists: the accusing girls and most of the accused witches. In Puritan society, the reinforcing hierarchies of gender, age, and wealth ordinarily cast young women working as household servants at the social bottom. They were supposed to labor in humble and silent obscurity, deferring

to their male elders and betters. In Essex County in 1692, however, a group of teenage girls, most of them servants, inverted the social hierarchy by claiming supernatural powers to discern witches. They boldly spoke out in meetinghouses and courts—centers of community power that were ordinarily closed to them except as a passive audience. The accusing girls also implicitly challenged the patriarchy by calling the tune for the prosecuting magistrates and by imperiling the reputations and the lives of some high-status men and women. “As in no other event in American history until the rise of the women's rights movement in the nineteenth century,” Norton remarks, “women took center stage at Salem: they were the major instigators and victims of a remarkable public spectacle.”

But deeper research soon persuaded Norton that the primary, long-hidden story required closer attention to “the hitherto neglected men accused in 1692,” especially Reverend George Burroughs. The writing of social history has certainly reached a new stage when a leading feminist scholar can conclude that her peers have so successfully rescued colonial women from obscurity that—at least for the Salem story—we have lost sight of pivotal characters because they were men.

Norton also transcends the usual focus by historians on Salem Village, where the crisis began, moving outward to the rest of Essex County, where that crisis culminated. It was the town of Andover, rather than Salem, that generated the largest number of accusations, forty of them. “Thus the term *Salem witchcraft crisis* is a misnomer,” Norton explains. “*Essex County witchcraft crisis* would be more accurate.” But old terms die hard, for the subtitle of Norton's book remains *The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692*.

In a third break with previous scholars, who depict a unified and steadily expanding crisis, Norton divides the crisis into two starkly different stages, with mid-April as the line of demarcation. In the early stage, the Salem Village episode resembled previous outbreaks: accusations were few, local, and conventional (quarrelsome older women and some of their husbands); and the authorities proceeded cautiously, probing the evidence before prosecuting. All that changed in late April, when the number of accusations suddenly soared, ascended the social hierarchy, and spread throughout Essex County and beyond.

Something happened in April to render the Salem outbreak unprecedented in scale and consequences. For Norton, explaining the escalation in April trumps in importance the outbreak in Salem Village in January.

NORTON EMPHASIZES THE CONFESSION on April 19 by Abigail Hobbs, a teenage refugee from Falmouth (now Portland) in Maine, then a frontier region governed by the colony of Massachusetts. In early 1692, most of Maine's settlements, including Falmouth, suffered destruction by the Wabanaki Indians and their French allies, sending demoralized refugees to Essex County. Under pressure from the accusing girls and the judges, Hobbs confessed that she had met the devil in Falmouth and signed his book. "Those who heard her confession readily grasped the connection between Satan and the Wabanakis," Norton announces; Hobbs's "confessions pointed everyone's attention toward events in Falmouth, and on the Maine frontier, with striking results." A night later, Ann Putnam—one of the leading accusers—had a horrific vision that identified the devil's viceroy in Maine as Reverend George Burroughs, a former resident of both Salem Village and Falmouth. Nothing could have been more sensational and shocking to Puritans than to discover that a minister had betrayed God and his Christian people to serve Satan. So it is striking that, instead of dismissing as incredible the spectral testimony of two young women, the magistrates made the most of it, arresting Burroughs for trial in Salem for his life.

Alas for Burroughs, he had made too many enemies, had sparked too much damning gossip, and had been in the wrong places at the wrong times. Although he was Harvard-educated and a minister, Burroughs held unorthodox religious beliefs and behaved in unconventional ways. He never sought ordination; he did not baptize his children; and he neither offered nor received the other ritual sacraments. Local gossip implicated Burroughs for abusing, and perhaps murdering, his first two wives. His checkered ministerial career included a contentious stint in Salem Village during the early 1680s, when he had lodged with the family of Ann Putnam, who reflected parental gossip in her vivid accusations. Moving northeast to the frontier settlement of Falmouth, Burroughs knew

Mercy Lewis and Abigail Hobbs, who later fled to Salem as refugees and there became leading witch-accusers. His enemies suspected demonic premonition when Burroughs twice left frontier communities, including Falmouth, shortly before their deadly destruction by Indians. The suspicious also detected a satanic bargain when Burroughs displayed a prodigious strength that transcended his short and wiry build.

Burroughs, his enemies charged, plied satanic magic to lead the dual attacks on New England: Wabanaki on the margins and witches at the core. To save their colonies, the Puritans had to destroy Burroughs and his network of witches. Convicted of witchcraft, Burroughs died at the Salem gallows on August 19. The Reverend Cotton Mather, a champion of the trials and executions, exulted that "our good God is working of miracles."

WHEN THE SALEM MAGISTRATES readily prosecuted a minister, the floodgates of accusation opened, flowing far and wide and up the social ladder to imperil other colonial leaders. "What linked them all—and what nearly all historians have failed to recognize—was the relationship of their targets to the Indian wars on the Maine frontier," Norton maintains. The new suspects included Captain John Floyd, a militia officer defeated by the Wabanaki, and Captain John Alden, a mariner suspected of trading ammunition to Indians and of taking their sexual favors in return.

Norton attributes the expanding Salem witch hunt to the shock felt by Puritan colonists at their stunning defeats on the northeastern frontier at the hands of the Wabanaki. Seeking revenge for stolen land, traders' cheating, and colonial insults, the Indians rapidly destroyed most of Maine's farms and towns with fire and massacre. Shocked out of their complacent sense of superiority over pagan savages, the Maine settlers blamed their colonial rulers based in Salem and Boston. Anguished colonists wondered why military assistance was too little, too late, and conducted by incompetents. And surely, the refugees reasoned, the simultaneous outbreak of witchcraft in Essex County could be no random coincidence.

To save themselves, the colonists had to determine what they had done to offend their vengeful God, who had lifted his protection to permit rampaging Indi-

ans and witches to smite his chosen but sinning people. The Puritans felt compelled to purify their ranks by forsaking their blind indifference to Satan's evident minions working within. And those minions, Norton suggests, could best be found among the men blamed for the military follies on the Maine frontier.

The residents of Essex County had particularly strong reasons to imagine that the witchcraft within had links to the Indian menace without. The county's leaders—the magistrates who investigated and tried the witches—also speculated in Maine lands and commanded the militia expeditions that failed so miserably to defend the frontier. And the towns of Essex County became crowded with distraught and disoriented refugees fleeing ravaged homes, mourning dead relatives, and looking for someone to blame. "Unable to defeat Satan in the forests and garrisons of the northeastern frontier," Norton asserts, "they could nevertheless attempt to do so in the Salem courtroom."

During the spring of 1692, the Essex County magistrates, principally Jonathan Corwin and John Hathorne, made fatal

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decisions that empowered the accusers to escalate a local crisis into a county-wide communal obsession. Breaking with the tradition of separate, skeptical examination of individual accusers and accused, the magistrates brought them all together in public court to watch the fits fly. Rational deliberation and legal procedure vanished at the public hearings, as the girls erupted in painful outbursts and vivid hallucinations when provided with an audience and faced by the suspects. Those physical outbursts and the "spectral evidence" of their visions became critical evidence against the accused. But to clinch their cases the magistrates needed confessions, which the communal settings promoted.

Under intense public pressure, including from spouses and relatives, many suspects broke down at the hearings, offering lurid confessions that confirmed the authority of the girls and that named new witches for prosecution. The magistrates compounded the incentives to confess by sparing the confessors from trial, provided they testified against the more defiant suspects such as George Burroughs. Some confessed Andover witches subsequently explained that at the communal hearings they were told, "We were witches, and they knew it, and we knew it, which made us think that it was so." One said that she "became so terrified in her mind that she owned, at length, almost anything they propounded to her." A Dutch merchant resident in Boston marveled that "throughout the countryside, the excessive gullibility of the magistrates has caused that which the tormented or possessed people bring in against someone together with other trivial circumstances to be taken as substantially true and convincing testimony against the accused."

By allowing the accusers to dominate the proceedings, the magistrates abdicated some of their power, and most of their discretion, to tormented teenage girls who professed access to a higher power. Norton elaborates: "Thus in the invisible world the afflicted, in effect, assumed the role of magistrates. They listened to the testimony of spectral witnesses (the murder victims) and extracted the confessions that Hathorne and Corwin could not." Ironically, Norton makes an unintended case for elite patriarchy as a lesser of evils—given the irrational destruction of life that marked the triumph of the young female accusers. Had the magistrates defended the powers of the pa-

triarchs, the girls would have been kept in quiet obscurity, and twenty Puritans would have led longer lives to natural ends.

Why did the magistrates defer to the girls? Norton answers that the Puritan elite subconsciously recognized their responsibility for failing to defend Maine against the Indians. Vulnerable to charges of supernatural betrayal, the judges slavishly followed the girls, determined thereby to prove their true zeal against New England's spectral enemies. The judges, Norton writes, "attempted to shift the responsibility for their own inadequate defense of the frontier to the demons of the invisible world, and as a result they presided over the deaths of many innocent people." She boldly concludes that "had the Second Indian War on the northeastern frontier somehow been avoided, the Essex County witchcraft crisis of 1692 would not have occurred. This is not to say that the war 'caused' the witchcraft crisis, but rather that the conflict created the conditions that allowed the crisis to develop as rapidly and extensively as it did."

NORTON PROPOSES AN INGENUOUS argument, but it is not quite as original as she insists, early and often. Although Norton can justly claim to have explored the Maine connection and the Essex-wide dimensions in unprecedented detail, she scants credit due to previous scholars who, in briefer versions, anticipated her accomplishment. For one example, Norton does not acknowledge Christine Leigh Heyrman's *Commerce and Culture: The Maritime Communities of Colonial Attention, 1690-1750*, which appeared in 1984, and called attention to both the Andover accusations and to the psychological impact of the frontier war on the witch hunt.

Norton's Maine connection works better as a partial coloration than as a single explanation for the whole complex, messy crisis. If ties to Maine, especially refugees, were pivotal, why were afflictions more intense, and accusations more numerous, in hinterland communities (Andover, Topsfield, and Salem Village), where refugees were relatively few, rather than in the seaports (Boston, Newbury, Ipswich, and Salem Town), where they were most numerous? And if the shock of frontier war shaped the visions of witches within, why was there no witchcraft outbreak during King Philip's

War of 1675-1676? That earlier frontier conflict killed more colonists, destroyed more towns, and affected more of New England than did the Second Indian War of 1689-1697. Although offering plenty of misery, the Second Indian War had an even more miserable precedent in recent memory that must have taken some of the shock out of the less destructive sequel. Norton's solution is to lump the two wars together in the minds of 1692, which begs the question of why it took the Puritans so long to react to the greater, earlier shock.

In driving her thesis, Norton makes the most of her evidence—and then some. She shifts to the foreground every circumstantial link between Maine and Essex County, Wabanaki and witches, while shunting to the background the evidence and the events, especially those internal to Salem Village, that loom larger in previous accounts. Where other historians highlighted the original accusers from Salem Village, especially Abigail Williams and Ann Putnam, Norton favors the subsequent accusers from Maine, especially Mercy Lewis and Abigail Hobbs. In assessing the twenty executed witches, Norton emphasizes the two who had lived in Maine rather than the eighteen who had not. To explain the prosecution of George Burroughs, Norton makes more of his Maine residence than of his heterodox religious beliefs, which so horrified his enemies and seem primarily to have motivated his prosecution.

In sorting the accused, she makes much more of those directly associated with the Maine military campaigns than of the larger number who had no such association. This selective emphasis is especially striking, because with the conspicuous exception of George Burroughs, the Maine-connected were often accused but rarely tried. Captain Alden broke jail with surprising ease, while the magistrates eventually dropped their case against Captain Floyd. For Norton, the broad pool of often tenuous accusations—which featured the Maine connection—seems more significant than the smaller subset of especially serious cases carried through to trial, conviction, and execution, where Salem Village predominated. Fundamentally, Norton distills her evidence from a diverse and diffuse body of testimony and then maximizes the weight of that evidence by redefining the topic of Salem witchcraft, focusing on escalation over origins and on accusations over convictions.

Norton's evidence often hinges on a speculative reading of snippets from Puritan testimony or commentary. Some afflicted girls saw spectral witches roasting victims on a spit, which Norton takes as resonating their dread of flaming tortures by rampaging Wabanaki. This is plausible, but hellfire was long associated with witches' satanic power. To clinch her point, Norton needs to demonstrate that torture by burning was a more common motif in 1692 than in previous witch testimony in New England. Similarly, when accusers described the devil and demons as black, Norton says that they were thinking of Indians: "Thus the frequent references to the 'black man' by confessors and the afflicted establish a crucial connection between the witchcraft crisis and the Indian wars." Maybe, but it was a very old convention, pre-dating contact with the Indians, for medieval and early modern Europeans to paint their devils as black. And "tawny," rather than black, was the usual coloration given by colonists to Indians. Apparently only one accuser explicitly described the devil as "not a negro, but of a tawney, or an Indian colour."

At some junctures the speculative evidence thins to nothing. On June 10, 1692, the Essex authorities hanged their first Salem witch, Goodwife Bridget Bishop. The next day Indians attacked the frontier town of Wells. Norton speculates: "Did anyone view the attack as revenge for Goody Bishop's execution? It would have been easy for New Englanders to reach such a conclusion, but no such reasoning is recorded in surviving documents." Similarly, Norton concludes that the judges "quickly became invested in believing in the reputed witches' guilt, in large part because they needed to believe that they themselves were *not* guilty of causing New England's current woes." But in no surviving document does a judge confess to this reasoning, nor did any of their contemporaries suggest such a judicial psychology of projection, which seems more modern than Puritan.

Norton responds that the silences in the documentary record indicate a purge of embarrassing documents by the authors or their descendants: "the holes in the documentary record are too consistent and specific to be explained in any other way." By imagining that the Puritans did write explicit evidence for her argument but then suppressed it, she sustains her pose of scrupulously reflecting

their world rather than her own modernity. Faulting other historians for applying "modern-day terminology to the incidents," she counters that "I have deliberately omitted attaching contemporary labels to the participants and their actions. Instead, this book focuses on describing and analyzing the crisis in seventeenth-century terms."

If this were literally so, Norton would endorse the Puritan explanation that the devil really did employ witches to torment colonial bodies and minds. In fact, as a twenty-first-century writer, she cannot simply borrow the past's own terms and categories. By plunging into archives to analyze documents by the rational conventions of modern scholarship, Norton inevitably interprets an alien past to contemporary readers seeking a secular explanation. By accounting for the witch hunt of 1692 in terms of mass hysteria following military defeat, Norton speaks to us rather than for the Puritans. In sum, she is too skilled a historian literally to practice her oft-repeated but misleading declaration of seventeenth-century authenticity. And given her own creativity at connecting the dots of circumstantial and rhetorical evidence in ways that no Puritan could, why would Norton wish to deny the impressive modernity of her effort?

ALTHOUGH NORTON EXPLICITLY denies the pertinence of modern psychology, it implicitly shapes her interpretation of the tormented (and tormenting) girls, as well as of the projecting judges. Only at the book's end, in a retrospective, does Norton render explicit her assumptions that the original afflictions were "genuine" and that the later confessors, especially the war refugees, manifested "post-traumatic stress disorder." But she also finds "prearranged collusion" in the synchronized visions that doomed George Burroughs, and Norton concludes that eventually "some of the afflicted accusers, reveling in the exercise of unprecedented power, began to augment and enhance their stories." Although credible to modern readers, none of these judgment calls echo seventeenth-century terms.

In her quixotic pursuit of a pre-modern sensibility for her explanation, Norton organizes her book in a manner meant to segregate her roles as narrator and historian. In the body of the text, printed against a white background, she

gives a detailed day-by-day recapitulation of the events in Essex County during 1692 with minimal analysis but many flashbacks to conflicts on the Maine frontier. She apparently intends to plunge readers into the spontaneous confusion of the unfolding events, as an antidote to the heavy-handed "modern" interpretations that Norton disdains in other histories of Salem. But Norton intermittently interrupts her narrative for briefer passages, boxed and printed on shaded pages, where she becomes the analytical historian, overtly explaining her methods and interpretations. She apparently assumes that most readers want their story "pure," with an invitation to skip past easily identifiable, and presumably boring, bits of scholarly explanation. In practice, however, Norton's shaded interludes are tighter, more lucid, and more compelling than the body of her narration, which suffers from long, repetitive stretches recapitulating testimony and random events. The innumerable snippet quotes, excessive detail, and blizzard of minor characters often lack any clear connection to her larger interpretation—other than the claim to immerse the reader in the (confusing) past.

The historian as detective explicitly weighing the evidence is the voice that best serves Norton—better than she recognizes, and far better than her distracting attempt at narrative verisimilitude. Indeed, if freed from confinement in a few boxes, the analytical mode would have brought clarity and discipline to the whole text, framing and winnowing the details, giving forest to the trees. In the end, Norton introduces a plausible dimension to the great American witch hunt: its intriguing, albeit tentative, links to frontier fear and loathing. But she falls short of her greatest ambition: to provide the one master key to the Salem witch craze, to present a supreme interpretation that sweeps all other contenders into the dustbin of history. The perplexity of the Salem witch hunt is not over. Neither readers nor historians can resist taking the Puritans' measure at their most mysterious, as believers in Satan's infernal world and in his destructive traffic in human lives and souls, because we long to know human nature in its most extreme and the past at its strangest. As our own culture evolves, we will revise our relationship with the witch-hunters, with renewed attempts to fathom a world that may be lost, or may be all too close at hand. ■

WASHINGTON DIARIST

Damned Yankees

AFTER NEW YORK YANKEES third baseman Aaron Boone hit one of the most memorable home runs in the storied history of the franchise, the editors of the *New York Post* made an embarrassing mistake. The *Post*'s printers accidentally received an editorial written for publication in the event of a Yankee loss to the Boston Red Sox in this year's American League Championship Series (ALCS). When Boone smashed his eleventh-inning homer and doomed the World Series hopes of the reviled Sox for yet another year, he delivered for Yankee fans their most euphoric victory in a generation. But, instead of reading about the tidal wave of emotion overcoming New York, fans who opened the next day's *Post* to the editorial page were bewildered to read of a nightmarish alternate reality and had to flip to the sports section to reassure themselves that the Yanks' thirty-ninth pennant victory was not in fact a late-night delusion. The *Post*'s competitors were hysterically gleeful. One writer e-mailed Jim Romenesko's popular media website to report that the *Post* was the laughing stock of the city. *The New York Times*, a perennial target of the conservative *Post*, highlighted the error under the smug headline "MEMO TO THE POST'S EDITORIAL PAGE: IT ISN'T OVER TILL IT'S OVER."

THAT WAS A BRAZEN MOVE ON THE part of the *Times*. After all, even the mistakenly published *Post* editorial clearly wanted the Yankees to win, defiantly warning, "Wait'll next year!" The *Times*, on the other hand, had deliberately published an editorial ten days earlier rooting against the home team in favor of its most hated rival. On October 8, with the ALCS beckoning, the *Times* came out for a "Dream Series" between the Red Sox and the Chicago Cubs, "with all due respect" to its horrified New York readers. "We find it hard to resist the emotional tug and symmetrical possibilities of a series between teams that seem to have been put on earth to tantalize and then crush their zealous fans," editorialized a

paper that for some reason is still known as *The New York Times*.

I UNDERSTAND THAT THE *TIMES* IS A national newspaper and has aggressively cultivated a readership outside of the tri-state area, where Yankee hatred is practically a religion. But, if the *Times*' newfound enthusiasm for the Red Sox was simply a craven pander, expect it to backfire. I have a feeling that even the fevered minds that hate the Yankees will look at the *Times*' sudden enthusiasm for the Red Sox with disgust. A paper that would prefer a hated enemy to the home team is something beneath contempt anywhere from Maine to California. No editorial could have been better crafted to create emotional distance from readers nationwide, who can be forgiven for wondering why the *Times* would stand up for their interests when it would abandon its fellow New Yorkers at such a critical moment.

BUT THE NATIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF THE *Times* probably aren't the real reason the Gray Lady betrayed the Yankees. Yes, the *Times* owns a stake in the Sox, but I suspect the paper's antipathy to the Yankees is due to the Yanks being rich and powerful. Their payroll is a gargantuan \$180 million, by far the largest in the game. The *Times*, with its tradition of skepticism toward money and power, is naturally repulsed. After the team struggled in May, *Times* sportswriter William C. Rhoden asked, "Who feels sorry for the Yankees? (Don't look at me.) They have the highest payroll in baseball." When the Yankees lost the World Series on Saturday to the Florida Marlins (who, the *Times* noted, have a \$52 million payroll), the *Times* ran a column headlined "ALL THAT MONEY, AND THE FANS LOOK STUNNED." The paper's coverage of the team is practically filtered through the prism of a dollar sign—an unhealthy approach to any institution.

IN FACT, THE *TIMES* SHOULD IDENTIFY with the Yankees. Like the Bronx Bombers, the *Times* outspends its competitors to attract talent—a recent *New Yorker* profile of R.W. Apple revealed that the journalist has a bureau-sized ex-

pense account—and expects relentless achievement. Yankee captain Derek Jeter could have been describing the paper when he noted in September, "Yeah, we got a chance to win because we spend a lot of money. But you still have to execute." And, much like the Yankees, the *Times* attracts rabid detractors, who parse every column inch for malfeasance, incompetence, and unfairness. The Yankees have critics no less hysterical than Bob Kohn, author of the recent screed *Journalistic Fraud: How THE NEW YORK TIMES Distorts the News and Why It Can No Longer Be Trusted*. Take, for example, Minnesota Twins Manager Ron Gardenhire, who grouched when his team faced the Yanks in the division series that the moving rendition of "God Bless America" performed by Irish tenor Ronan Tynen—introduced in 2001 as a memorial to the victims of the September 11 attacks—was a nefarious scheme to elongate the seventh-inning stretch and wear down the visiting team. It was an absurd accusation: It's not as if the Twins had to do push-ups while the Yankees doffed their caps and misted up. (Rhoden, of course, wrote that Gardenhire was "right," yet, somehow, "God Bless America" didn't save the Yanks from the Marlins.)

IT HURT WHEN THE YANKEES LOST TO Florida in six games, and I won't begrudge the rest of the country a good gloat. (Though the victory over the Red Sox was an epic that will be remembered far more vividly than the Series.) But let me disabuse Yankee haters like Hartford resident Chad MacDonald, who was quoted in the *Times* as saying that Yankee fans simply "expect to win." That's not true. Yankee fans like myself had our fandom shaped by the miserable drought years of 1980 to 1995, when not even first-rate talents like Don Mattingly, Willie Randolph, Dave Winfield, and Dave Righetti could rescue the team from bitter loss after bitter loss. On the bus to my Canarsie elementary school in 1986, I remember watching formerly stalwart Yankee fans doing the Tim Teuffel Shuffle in the hope that the Mets would win the World Series. Even during the Yankee renaissance that began in 1996, the victories have always felt precarious (well, maybe not in 1998). It might surprise the *Times* to learn that today's Yankee fans have a sense of tragedy to go with the triumphalism. Maybe the *Times* will pay some attention next season.

SPENCER ACKERMAN

When Patients Pay, Costs Come Down

Scott W. Atlas, M.D., is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and professor of radiology and chief of neuroradiology at Stanford University Medical School.

The past several years have seen dramatic attempts to control costs in the U.S. health care marketplace. These attempts have given rise to unprecedented dissatisfaction and widespread skepticism about managed care among patients, doctors, and insurers. Moreover, health care costs keep rising. **Despite the recognized failure of managed care to control costs, and the failure of Canadian-style health care to deliver timely access to high-level medical care, there is now a call for even more bureaucracy:** government-directed nationalized health care, the opposite of what we need. What we need in the United States is an infusion of free market exposure, giving patients authority for decisions about health care and responsibility for spending their health care dollars.

What would be the effect of such remedies on health care costs? Since medical technology is considered a prime cause of the high costs of medical care, let's look at one such case in point—whole-body computed tomography (CT) screening centers, which use sophisticated and expensive imaging technologies. Over the past decade, hundreds of these centers have opened, primarily in affluent population centers in California and the Northeast. Patients are self-directed to these centers—there is no need for physician referral or input. And patients pay directly out of pocket, with no insulation from the price of their medical care by insurance agencies. When given the authority and financial responsibility

for these tests, patients have exercised value-conscious purchasing. The costs have dramatically lowered over time; what was once a \$1,500 scan is now often advertised at one-third of that price!

Similar free market-driven price reductions have been seen with other advances in medicine. Laser surgery for vision correction was initially not a covered surgical procedure; thus people desiring this treatment paid for it directly. Charges for this surgery came down by more than half over the first several years. A number of cosmetic plastic surgery procedures are also not covered by traditional insurance; again, prices diminish over time as consumers factor cost into their decision-making process. Out-of-pocket expenses for health care are important to consumers—**consideration of price is an essential component of a free market economy, and health care is no exception.**

Cost controls have been attempted numerous times in a variety of other markets in the past, and the consequences have been disastrous. We do not need more insurance coverage with increases in benefits. In fact, the opposite—exposing medical care to free market economics—is essential. More direct spending of money by patients will increase competition and drive down costs. Our world leadership in advanced medical care and access to it are in jeopardy if a nationalized health care system, with more governmental controls and isolation of patients from value considerations in spending their health care dollars, is put into place.

—Scott W. Atlas, M.D.

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